DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 430 CE 079 102

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TITLE VET in the Learning Age: The Challenge of Lifelong Learning for All. Volume 2: Overview of International Trends and Case Studies.

INSTITUTION National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Leabrook (Australia).

SPONS AGENCY Australian National Training Authority, Melbourne.

ISBN ISBN-0-87397-546-4

PUB DATE 1999-00-00

NOTE 89p.; For volume 1, see CE 079 101.

AVAILABLE FROM National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), 252 Kensington Road, Leabrook, South Australia 5068, Australia; e-mail: ncver@ncver.edu.au; Web site: http://www.ncver.edu.au/

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.

DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Case Studies; *Educational Needs; *Educational Practices; *Educational Trends; Foreign Countries; International Organizations; *Lifelong Learning; Needs Assessment; Postsecondary Education; Trend Analysis; *Vocational Education

IDENTIFIERS *Australia; European Union; Information Age; *Learning Society

ABSTRACT

Trends in lifelong learning were examined through a review of the following: perspectives of selected international organizations (Council of Europe; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; and the European Union); experiences of five European countries (Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom); and case studies of lifelong learning in five Australian cities (Albury-Wodonga, Ballarat, Devonport, Newcastle, and Canberra). The study identified four bottlenecks that must be overcome if the rhetoric surrounding lifelong learning is to be converted into reality: (1) developing a culture of lifelong learning must be motivated by more than the economic rationale that currently dominates policy thinking; (2) despite persistent efforts at bridging the differences between general education and vocational education and training, the gap remains; (3) the level of employer involvement in lifelong learning programs clearly remains inadequate; and (4) new resources are needed if implementation of policies for lifelong learning is to become affordable. (Contains 23 references. Appended are a list of the lifelong learning conclusions adopted by the Council of the European Union and an overview of Sweden's Adult Education Initiative. The case studies, which contain 10 tables, make up approximately 60 per cent of this document.) (MN)

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LIFELONG LEARNING

VET in the learning age: The challenge of lifelong learning for all

Volume 2
Overview of international trends and case studies

Peter Kearns, Rod McDonald, Philip Candy, Susan Knights and George Papadopoulos

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Volume 2
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Peter Kearns, Rod McDonald, Philip Candy, Susan Knights and George Papadopoulos

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ISBN: 0 87397 546 4
TD/TNC: 59.04

Published by NCVER
ACN 007 967 311
252 Kensington Road, Leabrook, SA 5068
PO Box 115, Kensington Park, SA 5068, Australia
www.ncver.edu.au

NCVER
National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd
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Preface

The studies in this volume were undertaken as part of the project on Lifelong learning: Implications for VET.

This study was commissioned by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and was undertaken by Global Learning Services in association with the Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training (RCVET) at the University of Technology Sydney. The findings and recommendations of this study are supplied in Volume 1.

The Overview of international trends in policies for lifelong learning was prepared by Dr George Papadopoulos, who was formerly an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Deputy Director with responsibility for OECD education activities. Dr Papadopoulos had access to up-to-date work by OECD and the Commission of the European Union in undertaking this study.

The case studies were undertaken by three members of the project team in selected regional locations. We found that both the case studies and Overview of International Trends elucidated themes and issues arising in the national consultations we undertook and added value to the project. We are grateful for the assistance we received from many people, both in Australia and overseas.

While the case studies and Overview of international trends signpost issues and roadblocks that need to be addressed on the journey towards a learning society with lifelong learning for all, they also demonstrate worthwhile initiatives that have been taken to progress this critical objective. The international study illustrates new forms of public and private partnership and fresh approaches to education and training in a challenging environment marked by exponential change; there is also much in the Australian case studies to engender confidence that the challenge of lifelong learning for all will be taken up in a co-operative way with the necessary strategic partnerships and shared vision at all levels.

Overview of international trends

Introduction

The consecration of the concept of lifelong learning has been the most remarkable phenomenon in the international discourse on education over the decade of the nineties. Even more remarkable has been the widespread acceptance that strategies for lifelong learning would provide the panacea to many of the problems—economic, social, cultural and even political—confronting our societies at the doorstep of the 21st century.

Both the rationale and the objectives of policies for lifelong learning have been amply stated—and advocated—in the work of international organisations, in official policy statements by governments, and in the rapidly growing volume of specialised literature in this field. They will be comprehensively recorded in the main body of this report, and there is no need to repeat them here. What is important to underline here is the gap which exists between the acceptance of the concept and its practical application as policy. It has happened before: governments find it easy to endorse concepts and principles of drastic educational change only to find that their practical application gets thwarted by the lack of new resources, and the corporatist behaviour of the established system, buttressed by vested interests, including political ideologies.

There is a real danger that this may already be happening with lifelong learning. The alacrity with which governments have endorsed the concept is, with certain exceptions, only palely reflected in concrete and consistent measures of implementation, let alone in the institution of overall strategies. So much so, that there is a clear tendency in many countries to put under the umbrella of lifelong learning all the disparate initiatives which have been introduced in different parts of their education and training systems, and which can be interpreted as responding in one way or another to the objectives of lifelong learning! Similarly, and as a result of this ad hoc approach, there is a marked tendency in many countries for the lifelong learning concept to be highjacked by various lobbies—traditional adult education, community and popular education groups, vocational training and apprenticeship institutions, entrenched schooling protagonists, universities and other higher education institutions—in order to secure additional resources and political support for their own aggrandisement.

With the above considerations in mind, this part of our report, drawing on international experience, is designed to

- outline a number of general features that are characteristic of the current approach to lifelong learning as distinguished from earlier approaches
- present the work of major international organisations and bodies that have been active in this field—the Council of Europe, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU)—and have played a determining factor in the definition of the rationale and objectives of lifelong learning, and have provided stimulus for its practical acceptance and implementation within individual countries

- provide examples of countries' practices and experiences in terms of both overall strategies and thematic experimentation
- suggest, in conclusion, the lessons that can be drawn from this experience so far, in terms of bottlenecks to be overcome and prospects for the future

1 The current approach to lifelong learning: Distinguishing features

It should be said at the outset that the concept of lifelong learning is not new. In a sense, it goes back to Plato and Aristotle; in those remote days the main concern was with the continuing education of individuals to enable them to perform their role as active citizens—as 'political animals,' in the Aristotelian definition of man. This remains an important objective of education to the present day; and it is significant that the 'popular education' and 'workers education' movements which originated in Scandinavia and spread through Europe in the 19th century had cultural, social and, indirectly, political (rather than directly work-related) goals as their primary objectives (Kallen 1996). These objectives remained prevalent even after the rapid expansion and institutionalisation of adult education, and it was only after World War II that the need for organised retraining of workers and the links to the formal education system began to be seriously recognised. It was in this new climate—propelled by rapidly increasing social and economic demands, and the massive expansion of education which followed—that from the 1960s onwards new models for the provision of education began to emerge under such titles as 'recurrent education,' 'continuing education and training,' *'education permanente,'* with lifelong learning as their leitmotif. The title of the 1973 OECD publication, *Recurrent education: A strategy for lifelong learning*, speaks for itself.

This brief incursion into history enables us to see how the antecedents of lifelong learning have been shaped by changing socio-economic and political conditions. It is this changed context within which the current debate takes place, and in which the distinctive features of policies for lifelong learning can now be identified.

The first point to note when discussing the distinguishing features of the current approach to lifelong learning is that, whereas previous paradigms were primarily driven by initially cultural and then social—particularly equal opportunity—objectives (as already indicated), the main driving forces behind the current advocacy of lifelong learning are the economic-cum-technological imperatives, and the needs arising from increasingly knowledge- and information-based economies that operate in a competitive globalised market system. It is true that broader objectives are taken into account—such as social cohesion, cultural and democratic values, etc.—but these are subsumed as products of an economy revitalised through lifelong learning, rather than as the prime movers of the strategy.

Second, policies for lifelong learning have received more weighty political endorsement and support than has been the case previously when such political endorsement was limited at best to ministers of education. Within the OECD,

for example, the precepts of policies for 'Lifelong learning for all' were endorsed—in addition to ministers of education—by ministers of employment, of social affairs and, finally, ministers of finance. This augurs well for the availability of additional resources for lifelong learning ventures. It is a reflection of the wider social and economic objectives of lifelong learning.

Third, in the earlier period, recurrent or permanent education was conceived essentially in the context of *formal* education. The coverage is now much broader, encompassing all learning activity wherever it may take place, such as enterprise-based training and individual learning—especially through the new technologies. Indeed, the emphasis is upon the learner and his/her needs, and upon the propagation of self-directed learning. The imaginative use of information technologies is an integral part of strategies for lifelong learning.

Finally, a word of caution. 'Learning' is a vital part of the educational process, but it is not synonymous with 'education.' Contrary to earlier paradigms, there is a danger that lifelong learning would be interpreted so narrowly as to imply the mere mastery of specific bits of knowledge or skills. This danger is reinforced by the economic/technological impetus behind the concept—reflected in the emphasis upon policies for lifelong learning place as *training*—as well as by the current trend to base judgements of educational achievement on those aspects which are amenable to quantitative measurement. Lifelong learning strategies will need to ensure that their objectives are well beyond this narrow and instrumental definition of learning. This is particularly relevant to the *training component* of such strategies which continues, by and large, to be treated in isolation from the broader humanistic culture within which it should be an integral part.

2 The perspectives of international organisations

It is interesting to note that the concept of lifelong learning, which had its origins in the 1960s, surfaced almost simultaneously in the three major international organisations: the Council of Europe, UNESCO and the OECD. (The European Union is a case apart). Though each had its own focal points of interest and action in this area, according to their respective missions and membership, the central idea was the same: the development of coherent strategies for the provision of education and training opportunities for all individuals over their whole life span.

Over time, this idea came to permeate all the educational activities of the three organisations. However, in the case of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, it would be true to say that the tendency has been for this concept to be diluted within the more traditional sectors of education; whereas in the case of the OECD, and more recently of the EU, there has been a more consistent and aggressive approach both analytically and in terms of policy formation and implementation, more directly relevant to the purposes of this report. Thus, in what follows, references to the Council of Europe and UNESCO will be brief and of a general character, while the OECD and the EU will be covered more extensively.

Council of Europe

Initiated in the early sixties, the concept of *'education permanente'* became the hallmark of Council of Europe educational activities throughout that decade and the next (Council of Europe, 1970, 1977 and 1987). It was propagated as a 'fundamentally new and comprehensive concept... an overall educational pattern capable of meeting the rapidly increasing and ever more diversified educational needs of every individual, young and adult, in the new European society.' It was seen as the best strategy for promoting equality of educational opportunity, but a strategy which would need to be organised with the full agreement and participation of all the parties concerned, and one which would bring together theory and practice, knowledge and competence, learning and doing (Ibid., and Kallen 1996).

Over the years, these principles gained widespread acceptance in Member countries, and no doubt gave credence to a number of piecemeal programs that have been instituted. Essentially, however, they remained locked into the established sectorial programs of formal education; apart from generating a climate of opinion in favour of lifelong learning, they have had little impact on the development of a coherent strategy as implied in the original concept.

UNESCO

Unlike the other three organisations with their regional and generally homogeneous constituencies, UNESCO is confronted with an almost impossible task of putting forward a comprehensive educational policy concept that would give unity to its new programs and meet the widely different needs, interests and priorities of its world-wide membership. Its entry into the arena of lifelong learning was consequently a slow and cautious process, inspired largely by the insights gained through its activities during the fifties and sixties in the field of adult education; these activities were themselves a response to the pressing problem of reducing adult illiteracy in developing countries. 1970 saw the publication by UNESCO of its first report on lifelong learning (Legrand 1970), followed by the setting up of an International Commission on the Development of Education under the chairmanship of Edgar Faure. The Commission's report was published under the alluring title *Learning to be* (UNESCO 1972).

In its advocacy of the importance of lifelong learning, based upon the individual's innate desire to learn (thereby leading to a more humane society), the report was welcomed by the entire UNESCO membership, irrespective of levels of development and political affiliations. On the whole, it would be true to say that 'Learning to be,' couched as it was in general and conceptual terms, served more as a source of inspiration rather than as a guide to practical action. Its impact on opinion should not be underestimated—nor should the stimulus it gave to the launching of specific programs related to the concept of lifelong learning, particularly literacy and adult education programs. On the whole, however, neither in the countries nor within UNESCO itself were the precepts of the report translated into global approaches to educational policies (Kallen1996).

One generation after *Learning to be*, the exercise was repeated, along almost identical lines. This time the International Commission, chaired by Jacques Delors, was charged with reporting on 'Education for the 21st century': an ominous assignment matched by the title of the resulting report, *Learning: The treasure within* (UNESCO 1996). Compared to its progenitor, the Delors report, while fully endorsing the humanistic values and objectives of education, represents some significant departures in its analysis of problems and proposals for their solution in line with the changed socio-economic and political context within which education now operates—in particular, the impact of globalisation, technology and increasingly knowledge-based economies.

Identifying the four pillars that are the foundations of education—*learning to be, learning to know, learning to do* and *learning to live together*—the report advocates policies for lifelong learning, 'the heartbeat of society,' in a much more explicit way than its predecessor as the only way forward. It stresses the need for a fresh approach

> *to the stages and bridges of learning, whereby the paths through education systems become more varied and the value of each is enhanced. While universal basic education is an absolute priority, secondary education has a pivotal role to play in the individual learning paths of young people and in the development of societies. And, higher education institutions should be diversified so as to take into account their functions and duties as centres of knowledge, as places of professional training, as the cross-roads for learning throughout life and as partners in international co-operation... In a world increasingly dominated by*

> *technology, emphasis must be placed on ways both to use technology in the service of education and to prepare people to master it for living and working. Getting the reform strategies right, by a broad-based dialogue, and by increasing responsibility and involvement of stakeholders at every level, will be a crucial element of educational renewal.* (Delors, in UNESCO 1996)

As with its predecessor, the Delors report has been generally endorsed, and has given rise to much discussion within individual countries and in regional conferences. It remains to be seen what its direct impact upon policies, and upon the educational programs of UNESCO itself, will be.

OECD

Activities relating to lifelong learning have been a regular feature of the OECD programs over the last three decades. They have been fully analysed and documented elsewhere, reflecting the Organisation's special approach to education and training policies in relating them to other sectors of policy, particularly social and economic policies (Papadopoulos 1994). In these relations, lifelong learning has provided a continuous and unifying theme, with the emphasis shifting over time between the social and the economic rationale, according to the prevailing political climate concerning overall policy objectives.

Thus it was that during the affluent sixties and early seventies, when the main concern was with social objectives—particularly greater equality of opportunity—the OECD launched its *Recurrent education* strategy (OECD 1973), which it sustained for over a decade. Central to this strategy was spreading educational opportunities over the individual's lifetime, to be available when needed, rather than concentrated in an ever-lengthening period of initial and often ineffective education. Not the least merit of such a strategy would be the possibility it provided of bringing together initial formal education and adult and on-the-job training in one single framework, enabling education and training to be attuned to the real needs of both the labour market and of individuals. In the longer term, the application of such a strategy would require drastic changes in the organisation of all post-compulsory education, to allow for alternations between education/training and work with a guaranteed return to formal education when and for whom it was needed.

Considerable work was undertaken within OECD, supported by Member countries, in analysing the various facets and practical implications of recurrent education. Successive conferences of the European Ministers of Education during the seventies fully endorsed the principles of such a strategy. And yet, in terms of application, any progress made remained piecemeal, unevenly spread across the countries. Countries were indeed ready to apply (and in fact *did* apply individual features of) the recurrent education strategy—particularly in improving the status of vocational education and its link to general education, the transition of young people to working life, the introduction of schemes to encourage on-the-job training (such as paid educational leave) and improved access by adults to higher education. However, no country could ultimately muster the political will, or stamina, to embark upon the radical changes to their established educational systems that were called for by the new strategy. (For a complete account of the recurrent education venture, and related bibliography, see Papadopoulos 1994, pp.112 ff.)

Current OECD work on lifelong learning is in many respects a continuation—but also a significant extension—of the recurrent education paradigm. At their 1990 meeting, OECD Ministers of Education concentrated their attention on the need to improve the *quality* of education at all levels and for *all* in society (OECD 1992). The subject of their 1995 meeting was 'Making lifelong learning a reality for all' (OECD 1996a). The shift in emphasis between the two meetings is significant. While the central objective—high quality education and training for all—remains the same, the concern in 1996 is with how to give reality to this objective. The answer is to adopt strategies for lifelong learning as the organising principle for guiding education and training policies, and introduce practical measures to give effect to such strategies.

That the Ministers meant business, both in their own work and that of the OECD, is well reflected in their communique:

> *We are all convinced of the crucial importance of learning throughout life for enriching personal lives, fostering economic growth and maintaining social cohesion, and we have agreed on strategies to implement it. OECD societies have made great strides during the 1990s, but now we need to find more effective ways of offering every one of our citizens such an opportunity. The target may be ambitious, but we cannot afford not to work towards it.*
>
> (Introduction to the communique by the Chairman, Simon Crean, Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Australia, in OECD 1996, p.21)

Stressing that strategies for lifelong learning need 'a whole-hearted commitment to new system-wide goals, standards and approaches,' the communique identifies four key issues crucial to the successful realisation of such strategies. These are:

- strengthening the foundations for learning throughout life, by improving access to early childhood education, revitalising schools and supporting the growth of other formal and non-formal learning arrangements
- promoting coherent links between learning and work, by establishing pathways and bridges to facilitate more flexible movement between education/training and work; and by improving the mechanisms for assessing and recognising the skills and competences of individuals, whether acquired through formal or non-formal learning
- rethinking the role and responsibilities of all partners—including governments—who provide opportunities for learning
- creating incentives—for individuals, employers and other education and training providers—for mobilising greater investment in lifelong learning opportunities

In each of these areas, the communique details the problems which arise and the action needed to resolve them. Taken together, they amount to a blueprint for the implementation of strategies for lifelong learning. It should be made compulsory reading for all those involved in such strategies. (For the full text of the communique see OECD 1996, pp.21–24.)

In addition to action at a national level, the communique prescribes specific supporting activities by the OECD itself; these activities range from technical and analytical work in the four areas, confrontation and exchange of country experience, to the overall monitoring of progress towards the realisation of lifelong learning.

The lifelong learning approach has now come to provide the unifying principle for all the educational activities of the Organisation, and also their relationship to broader activities in the social, employment and economic sectors, responding to the need for developing stronger, more coherent partnerships between a wide range of actors across society. It is this consistency of approach, brought about by the lifelong learning imperative, that gives the Organisation's work in education its new look.

The volume and variety of these activities precludes their detailed description here. However, it is of interest to observe:

- firstly, the forward-looking approach to the more traditional sectors of education: for example, combating school failure, 'schools for tomorrow,' teachers for tomorrow's schools, opening pathways from education to work, redefining tertiary education, etc.
- second, progress made in the monitoring of country progress, particularly in the evolution of overall policies, of youth pathways and in the financing of lifelong learning (OECD 1998)
- third, in the analysis of the contribution of lifelong learning to broader social and economic issues, such as social exclusion, cities as learning centres, and the development of internationally comparable indicators of adult literacy and human capital investment (OECD 1998 bis)

Some of these activities will be taken up in chapter 3 below, as they relate to the very active participation of Member countries in these activities. (This is, in itself, a clear indication of the impact of OECD work on national situations.)

The European Union

The European Union is not an international organisation in the sense of the three organisations discussed above. Its executive body, the Commission, is in fact the nearest thing to an international *government* that has been devised so far in the process of European integration. This gives it an advantage over the other international agencies in that its remit is more prescriptive, its membership more concentrated, and its resources more ample; this, in turn, enables it to mount large-scale projects in the countries, backed by substantial financial incentives and the political commitments that go with Union membership.

Education is not new to the EU. What is new is the strategic importance it has now come to occupy in the broader social, employment and economic objectives of Union policies. Since the 1960s, and under the restrictive mandate of the Treaty of Rome concerning education, action in education and training focused on co-operation, exchange of experience, support for innovation and the development and co-ordination of training policies. It also boosted significantly industry/education co-operation, and the mobility of students and people in training. The turning point came in 1993, with the adoption of the White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment. The paper stressed that the development of education and training is one of the conditions for a new model of more employment-intensive growth. Coupled with growing consensus within the Union on the need to increase and consolidate educational activity, the 1993 White Paper led to two new initiatives:

- the setting out, in the form of guidelines for action, of detailed proposals designed to serve as a basis for the Commission's policy in education and

training—presented in a new White Paper entitled *Teaching and learning: Towards the learning society* (Commission of the European Communities 1995)

- the decision by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, in October 1995, to designate 1996 the European Year of Lifelong Learning

Both initiatives aimed to provoke a wide-ranging debate at every level on the need for lifelong learning, and thereby '... sensitise Europeans to the upheavals brought about by the advent of the information society, the process of internationalisation and scientific and technical progress, and to the potential contribution of education and training towards meeting this challenge' (Cresson 1996).

Thus, the Union set itself on the road of lifelong learning—an objective that was incorporated in the Amsterdam Treaty, expressing the determination of the Union *to promote the highest level of knowledge for its people through broad access to education and its permanent updating*. The stage was set for the final act: the setting out of guidelines for future EU action in the areas of education, training and youth for the period 2000–2006, presented in the 1997 White Paper: *Towards a Europe of knowledge*.

It is interesting to note that, in looking at the above stages in the evolution of EU commitment to lifelong learning, there has been a shift (to many people, a welcome shift) from a heavily economic rationale, to one that takes on social concerns as well. This is clearly observed in the differences between the 1995 and the 1997 White Papers. In the case of the former—*Towards the learning society* (which, it should be noted, was the joint product of the Commissioner for research, education and training, the Commissioner for employment and social affairs, and the Commissioner responsible for industrial affairs, information and telecommunications technologies)—the societal impact of the three challenges (information, internationalisation and scientific and technological knowledge) was seen essentially in terms of changes in working patterns, job creation, production methods and competitiveness. The overall response was seen to lie in reinforcing the merits of a broad base of knowledge and in building up employability—all couched in language which, to many of its critics, was reminiscent of the familiar perspective of technological determinism. (See, for example, de Iribarne, 1996.)

Be that as it may, the White Paper was a blueprint for action, to shape EU work over the next two years. Its guidelines were grouped under the following five general objectives:

- Encourage the acquisition of new knowledge, through the recognition of skills, encouraging mobility, and multimedia educational software.
- Bring schools and the business sector closer together, through apprenticeship/trainee schemes and vocational training.
- Combat exclusion, through second chance schools and European voluntary service.
- Encourage proficiency in three community languages.
- Treat capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis.

The pursuit of these objectives was both propagated and tested out in the massive program of activities organised during the European Year of Lifelong Learning. Over 500 events were organised at all levels, in the form of

conferences, seminars, competitions, multimedia development work, the designing and dissemination of educational software, television programs, and publication of examples of good practice—covering all forms of formal and non-formal education and training. National co-ordinating bodies were appointed by the Member states to direct projects at national, regional and local level, to disseminate information, and to contribute to the assessment and follow-up in their countries.[1] It was on the basis of this collective experience that the Council of the European Union, in December 1996, adopted the series of conclusions on lifelong learning which appear in appendix 1 of this report. These, in turn, influenced the formulation of the guidelines for future EU action put forward in *Towards a Europe of knowledge.*

The shift in emphasis from the earlier paper is evident in two respects. Firstly, explicit recognition is given to the importance of knowledge policies that the Commission had already put forward as one of the four fundamental pillars of the Union's policies:

> *Real wealth creation will henceforward be linked to the production and dissemination of knowledge and will depend first and foremost on new efforts in the field of research, education and training and our capacity to promote innovation. This is why we must fashion a veritable 'Europe of Knowledge'. This process is directly linked to the aim of developing lifelong learning...*

Second, the later paper recognises that the contribution of learning to community development and social inclusion—to fostering a sense of citizenship, responsibility and identity—is as important as its contribution to the economy. 'We must try to bridge the "learning divide"—between those who have benefited from education and training and those who have not.' Thus, the social dimension of education and its role in the enhancement of citizenship has now joined knowledge and employability as the three dimensions for 'the gradual construction of an open and dynamic European educational area.'

To move in this direction, six types of action are envisaged:

- encouraging physical mobility, extending to all the target groups
- encouraging virtual mobility: mobility through communication/information networks and the production and dissemination of multimedia and audio-visual products and services
- building up co-operation networks at European level to facilitate exchange of experience and good practice
- promoting language skills and the understanding of different cultures
- pursuing innovation through pilot projects based on trans-national partnerships to create education and training products or instruments for the accreditation of skills
- improvement of community sources of reference with regard to education, training and youth systems, and policies in the member states—for example, data bases, knowledge of educational systems, etc.

Essential to the success of activities in these areas is the establishment of a framework of responsibilities shared between the community, member states and other partners involved (educational, social, economic, regional and local, and partners in the voluntary sector). Developing such partnerships, both in the design and delivery of lifelong programs, is increasingly seen as a necessary condition for the success of such programs.

A good illustration of both the objectives of the new program currently under elaboration and the variety of issues that come into play, is provided by the proceedings of the May 1998 conference, held in Manchester under EU auspices, during the UK presidency. In certain ways, it was a review of the progress made so far but, more importantly, it reflected the changed orientation as outlined above. This is clearly shown in the declared aims of the conference. Under the title *The learning age: Towards a Europe of knowledge*, the aims of the conference were to:

- further the development of practical strategies and coherent application of policies at European, state, regional and institutional levels, which maximises the contribution lifelong learning can make
  - to employability, adaptability and competitiveness, and
  - to promote social inclusion
- make the most creative use of new information technologies, to increase access to learning opportunities throughout life

By no means the least value of the conference was the opportunity it provided, through workshops and on-site visits, for access to England's wide and varied experience with concrete measures and experiments directly relevant to the above objectives. The conference report, when available, should make interesting reading.

Notes

1 Post-school vocational training was singled out for special attention, leading to a series of national surveys analysing major developments and perspectives in this area. See European Commission 1997 (and accompanying *Synthesis Report*).

3 Country experience

There can be no doubt that the work of international organisations, as described above, has provided stimulus and support, and a useful dose of legitimisation, to the work undertaken in individual countries—at government as well as at local and institutional levels. But, while it has been fairly easy to sketch a rational and coherent approach at the international level, it is more difficult to do this when it comes to the plethora of national programs that have been initiated in many countries under the banner of lifelong learning.

However, the significance of these programs should not be underestimated. The majority are targeted at specific population groups and/or problem areas within country-specific contexts. In a few cases—Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, for example—they are presented as integral parts of national strategies for lifelong learning. Taken together, they reflect a quasi-universal *prise de conscience* on the part of national governments of the importance of lifelong learning as the ultimate objective for the longer-term development of their education and training policies—always seen as essential to their social and economic prosperity. This is clearly demonstrated by the evidence made available to the OECD under its ongoing exercise of monitoring the implementation of lifelong learning policies in its Member counties.

Based upon this evidence, representative examples of country experience are presented below.

Overall policies

Few countries have both enunciated overall policies for lifelong learning and accompanied them by implementable measures to give effect to such policies. These few are embodied in official publications (as indicated below), of which only summary indications can be given here.

A good example is provided by the United Kingdom—more particularly England—in its Green Paper, *The Learning Age: A Renaissance for a new Britain*, submitted to Parliament in February 199[illegible] (parallel documents were issued for Scotland and Wales). The ambitious targets set out in the paper include:

- priority for an extra 500 000 people in further and higher education by 2002
- doubling help for basic literacy and numeracy skills amongst adults to involve over 500 000 adults a year by 2002
- providing incentives for young people to continue to study beyond age 16
- raising standards across teaching and learning through a new Training Standards Council
- establishing clear targets for the skills and qualifications required nationally

- building a qualifications system which is easily understood, gives equal value to both academic and vocational learning, meets employers' and individuals' needs and promotes the highest standards
- working with business, employers and their trade unions to support and develop skills in the workplace.

Each of these objectives is operationally defined and new instruments are set in motion for their implementation. Among these, and directly geared to the overall objective of widening adult participation in and access to learning, the most innovative ones are the setting up of the University for Industry (UfI) and of Individual Learning Accounts.

A public/private partnership, the UfI will be an organisation for open and distance learning which will have both private individuals and businesses as customers. It will help people and business to identify the learning they need and to access this learning through computers and broadcast media, at home or in the work place, or by tapping into high quality products and services through a network of 'learning centres' to be established throughout the country by organisations and local partnerships on a franchise basis. During its early years, the UfI will focus on priority target areas covering basic skills, information and communication skills, the management of small and medium-sized businesses, and skills in specific industries and services. To get UfI started, the Government is investing £15 million in 1998–99. It will become operational by the year 2000.

By the same year, a framework for a national system of 'individual learning accounts' will also have been set up. The two key principles behind this scheme are 1) that individuals are best placed to choose what and how they want to learn, and 2) that responsibility for investing in learning is shared.

Learning accounts will be available to everyone, including the self-employed. They will be used, at the learner's choice, to pay for learning—be it an evening class, or a learning program bought through UfI, or meeting the cost of child-care so as to give time to study. In essence, they will be individual savings accounts with a bank or other financial institution, encouraged by government either through tax incentives or by matching the individual's contributions with public support. Local careers and guidance services will offer account holders information and advice about what and how to learn. As a first step, £150 million, funded from TEC's resources, will be made available to open one million accounts, each receiving £150 against a minimum of £25 from the account holder.

Additional support for these initiatives will be provided by the gradual development of the National Grid for Learning, recently announced by the Prime Minister. It is designed to help teachers and students gain access to a wide range of learning materials on-line, including a virtual Teachers' Centre on the Internet.

Finally, and as a clear indication of the seriousness with which the above policy initiatives are being pursued, it is worth noting that a Minister with special responsibilities for lifelong learning has now been appointed within the Department for Education and Employment.

Examples of other countries that have published national statements outlining their vision of lifelong learning policies can be briefly mentioned (OECD 1998).

In Finland (*The joy of learning: A national strategy for lifelong learning*, 1997), the emphasis is on the promotion of broadly-based continuous learning, combining 'learning careers' with activities in communities where people live and work. Policy objectives relate to personality development, strengthening democratic values and social cohesion, and meeting the challenge of internationalisation, linked to improved capacity for innovation, productivity and competitiveness.

These objectives are shared by other Scandinavian counties, with their long-established tradition of adult and community-based education. In Norway (*The new competence*, 1997), priority is placed on the provision of basic education for both young and adults who have missed out on their initial education; on reinforcing co-operation between government and social partners to meet workplace learning needs; and on evaluation and recognition of learning needs wherever it takes place.

In the Netherlands, a year-long national Knowledge Debate has resulted in an action program to implement lifelong learning (*Lifelong learning: The Dutch initiative*, 1997). It recognises the broadest meaning of lifelong learning in which 'initial education forms a major link.' The rationale is both social and economic, and much of the Action Program revolves around the employability of workers and job applicants, the employability of teachers and researchers, and the prevention of educational disadvantage through a reorientation of education starting from pre-school years. As is the case in Norway, a social partnership model is strongly advocated. Underlining the specific lifelong learning needs of older workers, long-term unemployed and women returning to the labour force, it stresses the particular role of incentives for these groups. It also highlights the importance of collaboration between central, regional and local governments in strengthening the public infrastructure of vocational and adult education, by the development of strong and relatively independent regional educational centres.

Operational programs arising from the policy frameworks outlined above are still in their infancy, and no conclusions can yet be drawn as to their efficacy. Though priorities between countries differ, it is at least possible to discern a number of convergent trends regarding the general concerns and directions of emerging policies for lifelong learning. Firstly, there is a clearly identified need to promote *the widest possible participation in education and training* for all age groups. Second, there is a realisation that such an expansion cannot be achieved by the public sector alone and calls, therefore, for *partnerships and learning networks* at central, regional and local levels. Third, for economic as well as social reasons (the two must go together), *priority should be given to those who are most in need*: the under-privileged and under-educated, unemployed adults and small businesses. And finally, great importance is attached to both meeting the needs of *information and communication technologies* and the effective use of these technologies in learning. These trends are also drawn out in the specific target-oriented programs, as discussed below.

Specific program areas

The foundations of lifelong learning: Initial schooling

It is generally agreed that any strategy to implement lifelong learning must recognise the crucial role of initial basic schooling, in providing a sound foundation to all young people for their subsequent learning and life more

generally. Yet, in spite of extensive reforms of schooling in recent years, it remains doubtful that these have been driven by the lifelong learning perspective. Moreover, a significant minority of young people—15–20 per cent—continue to leave secondary schooling without having acquired any recognisable skills or qualifications for entry into working life or further study. In the context of lifelong learning strategies, *combating school failure* remains, more than ever, a top priority.

Equally important is the consensus among all concerned—educators, parents, and employers—that what is expected of schools is not to produce specific job specialists, but rather young people with a well-grounded all-round education, who have 'learned how to learn,' are endowed with inter-personal, communication and problem-solving skills, and have the ability to use new information and communication technologies. These are non-curriculum competences which call for a redefinition of the traditional core curriculum (for example, computing skills have become part of the new basics), as well as more active approaches to learning, involving problem-solving pedagogies and stronger links between subject-based theoretical knowledge and its practical applications. Thus, traditional distinctions between academic and vocational learning fit poorly this dynamic, lifelong curriculum framework. The challenge is to develop flexible curricula opening up individualised learning paths, yet which equip all with the essential competencies and motivation to continue as lifelong learners (Istance 1998).

It is in these directions that many OECD countries are now pursuing their school reform policies—in close co-operation with the Organisation under the CERI 'Schools for Tomorrow' project.

Beyond compulsory schooling: Broadening pathways to learning and work

Reform of upper secondary education—15/16 to 18/19 years old—has been, and continues to be, a central policy concern in most industrialised countries. This is the stage where the future career patterns of young people are decided, and where the effects of social/educational disparities become most manifest. The debate revolves around the terminal versus the continuing education functions of this level of education, which are strongly associated with the vocational/academic divide, extending into tertiary education, and nowhere yet satisfactorily bridged.

The fact that, because of youth unemployment and growing social demand for education, the quasi-totality of young people of this age now participate in various forms of education and training has sharpened the need of devising new, more individually-based, pathways to further learning and work. This is reinforced by the growing convergence between vocational and general education resulting from the increased component of theoretical knowledge in job-related preparation and the recognised value of practical experience in academically-related pursuits.

Existing pathways are of three types:

- general, academic education
- predominantly school-based vocational pathways leading to work, to further education or to both (for example Sweden, and more recently Greece)

- apprenticeship pathways in which learning within paid employment is combined with classroom learning (for example the so-called 'dual system' in German-speaking countries)

While the schooling model was the favoured one in earlier times, because it was judged more equitable, apprenticeship systems of the German type have predominated more recently, because of their proven capacity to keep unemployment rates among 15–19 year-olds relatively low. Yet their popularity seems to be decreasing now, partly because difficult economic times and increasing competition have forced firms to become more reluctant to offer apprenticeships; and partly because more and more young people, including Austrian and German, now want to register in general education instead of vocational and technical courses. From the individual's point of view, the main drawback of apprenticeships is that they do not leave open the possibility of entering tertiary education at a later stage.

There is, thus, an emerging trend in a number of countries towards a broader approach to pathways that can meet the demand for conventional tertiary education and the requirements of the job market. Such double-qualifying pathways include many types of early contact with the labour market—from formal apprenticeships to internships and student projects—and enable students to see the world of work and study as intertwined, therefore creating a positive attitude towards lifelong learning. There are studies which show that vocational approaches that can qualify young people for both work and tertiary-level study are attractive—as is the case, for example, with the BHS schools in Austria or the Community Colleges in North America (OECD 1998c).

In terms of the wider issue of how to develop *coherent* education, labour and social policies for young people in preparing for work and lifelong learning, mention should be made of the *youth guarantee* approach that Nordic countries have been developing for the last two decades. This approach provides a guaranteed opportunity to all, by way of a place in either education, training or work up to the age of 18 or 20. A system of incentives and penalties, with tight safety nets for those who fail, has helped make this approach work (Durand-Drouhin 1998).

Tertiary education

Tertiary education—comprising universities, non-universities and other institutions dispensing education beyond the upper secondary school level—occupies an important role in the success of lifelong learning strategies. It is a sector that, in spite of the very significant expansion of participation in recent years, is set to continue to grow under the pressure of social demand. Tertiary level qualifications have become the normal currency in many parts of high-skill labour markets, and the demand for advanced learning goes well beyond that which is directly job-related. It is also a sector that consumes very large numbers of resources—mostly public in many countries—yet one which remains highly selective in terms of the social composition of its participants. Questions therefore arise as to the organisation and the range and quality of learning available; of equity, particularly in relation to those who do not enter tertiary education; and of costs and financing.

These questions are at the heart of the debate on overall higher education policies in many countries—many aspects of which are beyond the scope of the present report. For our purposes, three main issues can be identified for comment. (Others, relating more specifically to Adult Education, will be taken up below.)

The first relates to the *initial* phase of higher education, in which half or more of the 20 year-olds in most OECD countries are now enrolled. Increasingly, the first years of higher education are seen as an extension of basic preparation for subsequent, more specialised studies—i.e., as part of the foundations for lifelong learning. Questions are thus raised as to the nature and duration of initial tertiary education and its adequacy in fulfiling its new role in a lifelong perspective.

Second, higher education institutions remain the chosen instruments for the provision of diverse possibilities for *continuing education and training*. Some of these possibilities are in the form of a return to conventional programs, whether as 'second chance' entry or to augment previous experiences or diplomas. Many adults, however, are seeking flexible, individualised learning options at the tertiary level in their middle and later years, taking forms other then conventional programs. Despite the burgeoning demand for these diversified adult learning needs, the institutional response remains relatively weak. Imaginative, bold initiatives will be required, with governments taking the lead, in creating infrastructure, incentives and targets, and bringing into play the full potential of information and communication technologies as well as new partnerships among providers and between educational institutions and employers and community-based initiatives. In this respect, the UK experience, already mentioned—particularly the University for Industry and Individual Learning Accounts—deserves close attention. (Note: a major investigation of the role of higher education institutions in lifelong learning is under way within the European Union programs.)

Finally, the diversification of programs, clientele and functions of higher education institutions in the lifelong learning perspective necessitates a new approach to their *credentialling and certification* systems and procedures. This is an area where the institutions themselves should be encouraged to take the lead. While standards of achievement should not be diluted, the nature of achievement requires broadening beyond the traditionally academically prescribed routes, to take account of learning outcomes acquired over time and in a variety of settings, including individualised learning and practical experience. The development of *competence-based* systems of qualifications and of *individual achievement profiles*—evident in a number of countries—reflects a move in this direction. A *modular* approach to course construction in higher education institutions would contribute to this objective.

Adult education

Adult education and training is the most crucial and problematic area for the attainment of lifelong learning. It is here where the gaps between current and desirable levels of provision are greatest and where inequalities are most marked. Political interest in this matter has been heightened by the results of recent surveys of OECD countries; these show that at least a quarter of the adult population fails to reach the minimum literacy levels needed to cope adequately

with the demands of everyday life and work, let alone structural and economic change (OECD 1995 and OECD 1997). The problems which are thus raised place education and training policies for this sector into the broader context of economic and social policies—particularly policies directed at combating *social exclusion*.

Difficulties in dealing with this sector are compounded by its very heterogeneous and segmented components. It comprises:

- general adult education in formal settings, including vocational education, basic skills education and self-improvement or leisure education
- labour market training for the unemployed and other special groups
- enterprise-based training, both formal and informal

Formal responsibility for these different areas of activity is absent in some countries, and in others it is spread between education and labour ministries at the central government level, regional and municipal authorities, and also, in some countries, employers and social partners' organisations.

Sources of funding are commensurately diverse. Employers provide most of the funds for enterprise-based training, with some government subsidies in the cases of training for apprentices and particular groups of employees, like those facing redundancy or needing retraining as a result of restructuring. Training for the unemployed and hard-to-employ is usually funded by the state, although employers make certain contributions in countries with compulsory training levy systems. General adult education may be funded by the state, or by voluntary organisations, and often involves individual contributions through the payment of fees (based on a forthcoming OECD report on *Financing lifelong learning*.)

The complexities outlined above make it difficult to formulate generalisations of country experience. It is clear that, because of the size and diversity of the groups concerned, all-inclusive policies are difficult, if not impossible, to establish. The approach, therefore, is *ad hoc:* different countries target specific groups, with economic criteria predominating. Funding is the crucial factor, particularly when it comes to enterprise-based training. It is more prevalent in larger companies rather than medium-sized and small companies, and in certain sectors rather than others. Those benefiting most tend to be those already better qualified and in more senior positions. Women and part-time workers are less provided for than men and permanent workers. Under-investment in training and unequal distribution of training opportunities tend to reflect the unpredictabilities of training benefits. Measures to increase the transparency and portability of qualifications—as in the UK and the Netherlands—have served to make the benefits from training more predictable, thus encouraging more personal investment. On the whole, although a variety of incentives are applied for firms and individuals, training remains under-funded and training markets under-developed.

To end on a more optimistic note, reference should be made to the one case which comes nearest to a comprehensive national policy on adult education: the Adult Education Initiative in Sweden. Aimed at halving unemployment by the year 2000, and at enabling disadvantaged groups to be brought closer to mainstream society, it is a good example of the Nordic tradition of seeking to

achieve, through education, both economic growth *and* social equality. Its main features are presented in appendix 2.

Learning networks

The spread of educational networking represents one of the most visible manifestations of the lifelong learning movement. Such networks operate both at national and international levels, not infrequently with links between the two. Essentially concerned with experimenting with new systems and ideas, their scope ranges from co-operative or joint projects to the setting up of organised arrangements for the exchange of experience and/or the pooling of resources. Under the SOCRATES and LEONARDO programs of the European Commission, more than 100 projects were devoted to increasing awareness of, and practice in, lifelong learning in and between the EU member states. These include support for National Education Weeks, learning networks, learning journals and publications, curriculum development activities, skills of teamwork, links with the community, and partnerships with business and other education organisations. The 1996 European Year of Lifelong Learning has given additional impetus to these activities in providing support, for example, for trans-national pilot projects focusing upon training delivery within small and medium-size enterprises, and the founding of a large number of national organisations under the EU Telematics Education and Training program.

At a national level, Learning Centres are coming into prominence in a number of countries. They are given a prominent role in the British White Paper, *The Learning Age*, which provides for close partnerships with regional, local and community authorities in the definition of their educational needs and in co-ordinated measures for meeting these needs. The paper states: 'The development of local learning centres in communities, in institutions, and at the work place will be a key aspect of the University for Industry.'

In the Netherlands, under the 1996 Adult and Vocational Education Act, Regional Education Centres have been set up under the responsibility of local authorities. They are formed through the merger of institutions involved in the delivery of secondary vocational education, apprenticeship and adult education, and have resulted both in a more flexible delivery service and in savings through more efficient use of accommodation and educational resources.

In Italy, the Formazione Technico-professionale Superiore provides a highly integrated approach to lifelong learning through a consortium of secondary schools, universities, professional centres and enterprises in a particular region. In Japan, the Lifelong Learning Foundation in Kameoka was established in 1990 to promote all types of adult education, with the support of local groups, corporations and enterprises (OECD, op. cit.).

In conclusion, and as a final example of networking, reference must be made to the OECD-sponsored project on *Learning Cities* (OECD 1993). Its broad purpose has been to explore, through a variety of examples, the degree to which cities could encourage a culture of lifelong learning. Initial city portraits in this area include: Edmonton (Canada), Pittsburgh (USA), Bologna (Italy), Vienna (Austria), Gothenburg (Sweden), Kakagawa (Japan) and Adelaide (Australia). More recently, the Kent Thames-side (UK) and the Vienne (France) regions have been added, as well as Jena (Germany), Barcelona (Spain) and

Copenhagen/Malmoe (Denmark/Sweden). This illustrates the extent of the spread of interest in the idea of the learning city, in which lifelong learning occupies a central role in community development strategies. (In the UK alone, over 20 cities and towns are already active in this field, and will be drawn into the Government's new lifelong learning strategy.)

Briefly stated, the idea of the learning city derives from the consequences of the industrial shift occurring in many countries that has left many cities in a state of physical decline and with little social cohesion. Coupled with the now recognised centrality of learning and knowledge to modern economic activity and prosperity, one response is to shape urban regeneration projects in partnerships that include an important learning component—to invest in formal and non-formal education and training, thereby creating learning cities or regions. The development of such cities/regions would have the following characteristics:

- a clear and sustained commitment from public authorities, education and research institutions, voluntary organisations and individuals to set learning at the heart of the city/region's development through partnerships
- a development strategy encompassing the whole range of learning, from early childhood to adult education
- creating globally competitive knowledge-intensive production and service activities
- improving human and organisational capacities and creating environments conducive to learning, creativity and change
- a specific purpose and identity implying shared values and networks;
- social cohesion, environmental issues and cultural activities as an integrated part of the city's or region's development

This provides the general framework within which the learning city network endeavours to elucidate the practical implications, based on specific case-studies of the participating cities and regions.

4 Conclusions

This overview of national and international trends in lifelong learning points to a number of bottlenecks which have to be overcome if the rhetoric is to be converted, albeit gradually, into reality. Only a few of the more salient ones can be mentioned here.

Firstly, developing a culture of lifelong learning has to be motivated by more than the economic rationale, important as that undoubtedly is, which dominates policy thinking at present. Promotion and incentive policies directed at raising the levels of participation in lifelong learning across all groups in society need to focus principally upon influencing individuals' attitudes, within a vision of society which is not only prosperous but also humane, just and culturally rich. Lifelong learning needs to become alluring to the individual and a high satisfaction in itself. This cannot be achieved without radical changes to the overall ethos of foundation education, involving changes in the teaching-learning process at school level and the eradication of school failure. Overcoming resistance to such changes, including that by parents and teachers, remains a major obstacle. Without progress in this area, those who are deprived of initial education will remain those who do not benefit from continuing education opportunities.

Second, in spite of persistent efforts at bridging the differences between general education and vocational education and training, the gap remains. This again is a cultural phenomenon, in societies which attach higher value to theoretical knowledge as against technical and vocational skills and competence. Redressing this imbalance should be a principal objective, in the first instance, of those concerned with policies for vocational education and training.

Third, it is clear that the level of employer involvement in lifelong learning programs remains inadequate, even though many countries do not currently have information about the total contribution that enterprises make. Under-investment by firms is especially weak in the case of their contributions to general vocational education and training, as distinct from what they pay for specific job-related training. The much-vaunted desirability of partnerships cannot be given reality unless employers are persuaded to increase their contribution in order to increase the collective economic gain from investment in lifelong learning.

This, finally, raises the question of the *affordability* of implementing policies for lifelong learning, particularly if the fight against social exclusion is taken seriously as a major objective of such policies. New resources are needed, and these can be found only marginally through switching funds from other sectors of education, or by applying efficiency and cost-reducing measures in the delivery of learning opportunities. The very use of information and

communication technologies, essential to the spread of lifelong learning systems, will in itself involve significant additional resource outlays—at least in the initial phase. There is a need, therefore, to supplement public funding with increased contributions by individuals and employers if lifelong learning is to become a reality.

In these circumstances, implementing such policies can only be done on an *incremental basis*, and this is what is already happening in a number of countries. The challenge to this approach to policy is to ensure that such an incremental approach is planned and implemented within an agreed overall framework for the longer-term realisation of policies for lifelong learning. The current debate on lifelong learning has at least opened up exciting new vistas for educational policy thinking.

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Appendix 1

The Council of the European Union adopted the following lifelong learning conclusions at its meeting on 20 December 1996.

- Lifelong learning initiatives should strike an appropriate balance between personal, cultural, civic and social dimensions, and economic and employment concerns. In addition, they should also include democratic principles and human rights values.
- Each stage of education and training should contribute appropriately to the continuum of lifelong learning.
- Lifelong learning must be based on a wide range of learning opportunities, allowing all individuals to progress in their education according to their social, cultural and economic interests and needs.
- Initial education and training are fundamental to Lifelong Learning and should include, in addition to the core basic skills of literacy and numeracy, a broad base of knowledge, skills, attitudes and experiences that will encourage and support learning throughout life.
- Lifelong learning should aim to promote individual abilities, enhance employability, make the best use of available human resources talent as well as contributing to the promotion of gender equality, the elimination of social exclusion and the promotion of active participation in a democratic society.
- Lifelong learning requires the development of flexible and innovative approaches to education and training including family involvement, in order to promote a sense of inquiry, initiative and motivation of individuals in the learning process.
- Lifelong learning demands that individuals, as learners, take a greater sense of responsibility for their own education, training and personal development and in this regard appropriate guidance or counselling should be available to adult learners.
- The continuum of lifelong learning should have as central objective at all stages the promotion of equality of opportunity.
- Collectively, individuals, institutions, enterprises, regional authorities, central governments, the social partners where appropriate, and society in general should, within their own areas of responsibility, create conditions for, and engender a positive attitude to lifelong learning in all its aspects and minimise obstacles to participation in education and training and other learning activities.

Appendix 2

The adult education initiative: Sweden[1]

The Adult Education Initiative is a five-year investment in adult education that started on 1 July 1997 and is intended to halve unemployment by the year 2000. In the first instance, it will not only increase the scope of upper secondary school education, but it will also shape adult education to the changing individual, working life and societal demands of the next millennium. The investment involves the creation of more than 100 000 new places in adult education annually. These, together with an additional 10 000 places in folk high school education, 5000 places in municipal adult education at the compulsory level, and 5000 places in pilot projects for advanced vocational training, will create 140 000 places annually. This corresponds to 3.5 percent of the total labour force.

Adults who have the greatest need for education and who have so far received least in terms of educational resources, will have the opportunity to develop new knowledge and skills. The main target group for the Adult Education Initiative is, in the first instance, those who are unemployed and either completely or partially lack a three-year upper secondary school qualification, but it also focuses on the needs of employees with little post-compulsory education or training. This initiative is particularly aimed at those who are in occupations and industries adversely affected by the market and structural changes (for example offices, health care and manufacturing industry).

This client group will have access to educational opportunities rather than unemployment benefits in the first instance. Within the framework of the Adult Education Initiative, opportunities for co-operation and joint utilisation of resources at the national employment offices and municipalities will be improved. This initiative will not replace existing education; instead, it provides an additional opportunity for adults to acquire education at the same time as other educational alternatives are also open to them. Not only the volume but also the content of courses will vary, and the training will be carried out by different education providers under the overall planning and organisation of the municipalities.

Municipalities have thus been allocated a new role as co-ordinators, and have been made responsible for creating an infrastructure for adult education, but not necessarily for organising all the education. They can choose between offering the education themselves or together with other educational organisers and local enterprises. For this reason, emphasis is put upon the need to co-operate with Study Associations, Trade Unions, Folk High Schools, the Vocational Training Centre and private educational organisers. With the exception of education provided by folk high schools, the syllabi and grading criteria in

municipal adult education will apply regardless of the provider, so that a degree of central control over quality is maintained.

A number of municipalities have already set up 'knowledge centres' with personnel from both the employment office and the municipality, where other education providers also have the opportunity to work together under a single structure.

Individual learners' desires, needs and circumstances will be instrumental in steering and shaping the form and content of the activity. Municipal adult education's traditional content of general theoretical subjects is supplemented by a major increase in vocational courses. Theory and practice are woven together into a new form of workplace training for adults. Different modes of study are available with increased use of distance education, part-time studies, evening course, and study sessions during the school holidays. One-year intensive preparatory course for higher education are also available.

A total of SEK 5 billion has been allocated to the municipalities from central government for this initiative. These funds can be allocated by the municipality in the way which best suits their local circumstances. However, municipalities have to demonstrate how they have produced the number of places for which they bid and how they have met the quality measures they have described in their application for funding. There is also an expectation that municipalities will participate in a monitoring and evaluation exercise. A pre-condition for the state grant to be paid out is that municipalities maintain the volume of upper secondary school education which they finance.

Notes

1 OECD (forthcoming), *Alternative approaches to financing lifelong learning*.

The case studies: Introduction

The case studies in this volume were prepared during 1998 as a component in the study of *Lifelong learning: The implications for VET.*

Five case studies were undertaken by three members of the project team for this study. They were:

Albury-Wodonga	Peter Kearns
Ballarat	Professor Philip Candy
Devonport	Professor Philip Candy
Newcastle	Susan Knights
Canberra	Peter Kearns

The case studies were intended to elucidate the themes and issues involved in fostering lifelong learning in the VET sector. It was decided to focus upon regional situations for the purposes of this study, so that the case studies do not address the issues involved in progressing lifelong learning in contexts such as the Australian metropolitan cities and in small remote communities. Further research is needed in these situations.

The context and emerging themes

The case studies were undertaken in the general context outlined in chapter 2 of our report. This is characterised by the impact of globalisation, new information and communication technologies, an environment of deregulation and re-engineering, a shift from an industrial and service economy to a knowledge-based economy, and shifts in social attitudes and values towards work and leisure.

These influences have impacted on each of the cities studied, as for example, in the announced closure of the BHP steelworks in Newcastle, the decline of the traditional industries in the Devonport area, and the reduction in public sector employment in Canberra. Adjusting to change is a theme that each of the case studies examines, although this theme may be observed most clearly in the Canberra, Newcastle and Devonport studies.

While economic restructuring is an influence present in all the studies, it is particularly significant in the Newcastle, Devonport and Canberra studies. These studies show problems and difficulties arising from this requirement while at the same time 'there is resilience and an underlying optimism'[1] in each city. The impact of these issues on the pathway towards lifelong learning for all is a central theme in the case studies.

The problems of change and adjustment are illustrated by these studies. In the case of Devonport there is a 'genuine concern that things have changed forever and that the future lies in new technologies and industries, and having a

flexible, responsive and better-educated workforce. The problem for many people is how to disengage from the old ways of doing things and to find the time to take on new skills.'[2]

It appears likely that the issues identified in these studies arising from economic re-structuring and change are to be found in regional centres across Australia, in particular in those locations most affected by economic change. This points to the need for broad integrated educational-social-economic strategies that assist people to adjust to change, support them in this process, and offer new ways of acquiring the necessary knowledge and skill to maintain employability and competitiveness in a context of exponential change and uncertainty.

The case studies suggest that the renewal and revitalisation of regional centres across Australia require integrated strategies that address economic restructuring objectives, while at the same time supporting communities in the process of change and adjustment, and providing incentives for stakeholders to invest in the necessary new knowledge and skills. The role of education and training in this process of adjustment is central.

The Learning City approach

For this reason we have taken a particular interest in holistic community based strategies which address these objectives. Examples of such strategies are to be found in the Learning City/Learning Town approach which has become common in Britain and elsewhere in the world, and in the emerging concept of a learning region as an approach to regional economic development.

The concept of a learning community (whether town, city, or region) offers a means of bringing together the growing imperatives for lifelong learning for everyone in the community, with requirements for urban regeneration and revitalisation, and managing the process of change in ways that bond the community for shared purposes. Cities such as Sheffield, Liverpool, Birmingham, Nottingham, Derby, and Glasgow illustrate this approach.

In the report of this study we have defined a Learning City, and the generic concept of a learning community, in the following terms:

- Cities are not simply places where large numbers of people live and work: they are also places where people experience leisure, culture, enterprise and education. In other words, cities are places that have learning at their heart. A Learning City unites all the diverse providers of learning to meet the needs and aspirations of all its citizens. Through the range of resources they bring together, learning cities can provide local solutions to local challenges.
- A learning community is any group of people, whether linked by geography or by some other shared interest, which addresses the learning needs of its members through pro-active partnerships. It explicitly uses learning as a way of promoting social cohesion, regeneration and economic development.

We further identify three types of learning community:

- a community defined geographically
- a community of practice: any group which shares a common purpose which bonds the group and gives meaning to their joint activity
- a virtual community

Examples towards these developments may be observed in the case studies, although each of these is at an early stage of development.

However, during the course of the project, the City of Wodonga declared itself a Learning City and set up a planning committee to develop planning to advance this objective. Ballarat has also set up a Learning City Taskforce, with representation of the various stakeholder groups, to examine the possibility of Ballarat becoming a declared Learning City.

The learning region

While the Learning City concept is attracting growing international interest, the learning region notion is at a more embryonic stage of development, and was reflected less in the case studies.[3] However, aspects observed in the case studies such as the use of industry clusters of firms in Newcastle and industry focus groups in Albury-Wodonga (which may be seen as learning systems) could be viewed as early steps towards a learning region approach.[4]

The notion of a learning economy derives from the characteristics of the emerging global knowledge-based economy, with the growing importance of knowledge generation and use to gain competitive advantage. This is expressed by Asheim in the following terms:

> *The learning economy is based on the view that knowledge is the most fundamental resource in a modern capitalist economy, and learning the most important process, thus making the learning capacity of an economy of strategic importance to its innovativeness and competitiveness.* (Asheim 1996, p.18)

While this theme emerged only lightly in the case studies, this is an area that requires further attention in developing strategies for lifelong learning that link to economic development strategies in cities and regions.

Lifelong learning and the case studies

None of the cities studied has yet instituted comprehensive policies and strategies to advance lifelong learning in the city for all citizens. However, various indications of development towards this objective may be observed in the case studies.

These include:

- the action of Wodonga and Ballarat towards becoming Learning Cities
- strategic planning for the school system in Canberra for the period 1998–2000 which includes a commitment towards lifelong learning as a priority
- the draft ACT Vocational Education and Training Strategic Plan for 1991–2001 which focuses on lifelong learning for the Canberra community
- the growing involvement of education institutions in regional economic development strategies, as in Albury-Wodonga, Newcastle, Ballarat, and Canberra
- the strengthening of adult and community education in some of these locations, in particular in Canberra

These developments are leading to stronger linkages between education institutions and their communities, including stronger linkages to regional

economic development strategies. This process is likely to stimulate the development of strategic partnerships which will diffuse learning much more widely in the community. Up to now the main driving force has been the recognition of education as an industry, both in terms of export of education services and as an incentive for investment in the region. However, this focus is now starting to broaden with a rising recognition of the role of education in underpinning economic, social, and cultural development in a community. This process can be observed in Ballarat where the Ballarat Educational Network, originally established to recruit overseas students, has evolved to encompass a wide range of educational issues.

While the developments towards lifelong learning strategies cited above illustrate the role of enlightened leadership in these communities in furthering lifelong learning objectives, there is little indication in the case studies that the significance of lifelong learning for economic and social development, and to maintain employability, is understood throughout the community. This confirms the general conclusion of our study that lifelong learning is not well understood and that a general demand for lifelong learning does not extend throughout the community, in particular among non-participants.

Overall, the case studies suggest that while lifelong learning is poised on the threshold of significant development, major barriers and roadblocks remain.

Issues and barriers

The studies undertaken have identified a number of major barriers to the objective of lifelong learning for all. These include:

- tensions between system values and procedures and local community needs
- the effects of competition policy that have encouraged competition more than co-operation and partnership
- strategic partnerships of stakeholders being not sufficiently developed
- the employers' role being underdeveloped
- the ambiguous position of technology, with the potential of technology to extend lifelong learning not sufficiently realised
- in some cases, but not all, the absence of a catalyst to bring stakeholders together for joint action
- insufficient understanding and demand for lifelong learning
- the heavy concentration of some VET providers on narrowly-defined instrumental vocational objectives, to the detriment of broader learning outcomes that would foster and support learning throughout life

This is a substantial set of barriers, pointing to the conclusion that the path to the objective of lifelong learning for all in a learning society will not be easy in Australia. There are major roadblocks which associate attitudinal barriers, vested interests, tensions and conflicts of values, and system weaknesses which hinder collaborative action to extend lifelong learning opportunities for the whole community.

The identified issues and barriers apply in different ways in the cities studied. In Albury-Wodonga, for example, systemic barriers are significant in the tensions that exist between the aspirations of a local community to manage their educational resources in optimal ways to serve the socio-economic development

of the region, and the sectoral divisions that arise from the organisation and funding of the sectors of post-secondary education under the Australian federal system.

The Devonport study, on the other hand, pointed to the need for a catalyst to bring stakeholders together to forge strategic partnerships to advance lifelong learning in the context of integrated economic, social, and educational development in the region.

All the case studies suggested that strategic partnership development could be strengthened to foster lifelong learning. This will require mechanisms to monitor and assess the quality and outcomes of partnerships, so that partnerships are enabled to become value added for participants.

The position of VET providers

The case studies showed a spectrum of positions in the role of VET institutions in the social, economic, cultural, and broader educational development of their regions. While one VET provider is explicitly planning to develop as a learning organisation with a range of roles in supporting economic, social, and cultural development in its region, others have a more narrowly defined focus on an instrumental mission in meeting the skill needs of industry. In the conditions of the New World discussed in our report, it is doubtful if such a focus will be sufficiently responsive to the new needs arising in a world of exponential change marked by the redefinition of work and social roles, and the blurring of traditional economic and social boundaries. This points to the need to orientate all VET providers to the requirements of lifelong learning in a learning society.

The ambiguous position of technology

A further significant finding from the case studies relates to the ambiguous position of modern learning technologies in extending lifelong learning. While we found a general recognition of the power and potential of modern technologies, a number of barriers to the more extensive use of these technologies existed. These included apprehension and lack of confidence among many potential users, and funding methods which favoured traditional delivery methods.

For these reasons, we observed little development of distributed learning networks designed to extend learning opportunities beyond the traditional campus context. There has been some development of learning centres in remote communities as, for example, in small towns around Albury-Wodonga. Up to now these developments have been mainly ad hoc initiatives, rather than a strategic extension of learning opportunities using the power of modern technologies aligned with effective educational and community development strategies.

However, there are a range of current developments across Australia, such as the Virtual Campus development in Victoria, which could change this situation. The effective use of modern learning technologies is clearly one of the keys to building a learning society, so that future developments in this area will be critical to address the issues identified in the case studies.

Attitudes to learning

A further important issue identified in the case studies related to attitudes to learning. In the Devonport study, for example, overcoming the stigma associated with learning was identified as one of the four key challenges to be faced.

Negative attitudes to learning often reflect unfortunate experiences in schooling, so that learning is associated with past failures in schooling. Such attitudes to learning exist both among individuals who have no motivation towards further participation in learning, and in the business sector—in particular in the small business sector. In Devonport this was reflected by the disappointingly low uptake and participation in business development seminars.

National surveys in both Australia and Britain have confirmed that a significant proportion of the population have negative attitudes towards learning and have indicated no further interest in participation in learning.

While the Devonport study brought out this issue most clearly, confirming the available national data, in the other studies the absence of information on participation and attitudes to learning impaired further examination of these issues. This is an area where further research is needed at both a national and local level, in examining attitudes to learning among non-participants and the influences that could bring about change.

The role of connective leadership and strategic partnerships

The case studies point to the significance of connective leadership in forging strategic partnerships to extend lifelong learning opportunities. By connective leadership we refer to a co-operative style of leadership which develops linkages and partnerships between stakeholders.

This influence may be observed in the Albury-Wodonga case study, in the close linkages among stakeholders reflected in the decision of the City of Wodonga to develop as a Learning City—while the Wodonga Institute of TAFE, with close linkages to the City Council and other stakeholders, is developing as a learning organisation.

This factor is present to varying degrees in the other case studies. The evidence of these case studies suggests that local strategic partnerships can more easily develop when education institutions are responsible to the local community and managed through local governing councils, as in the cases of Wodonga and Ballarat.

The case studies also make the case for community based strategies that involve strategic partnerships and alliances. The studies show that such partnerships may evolve in a number of ways, although the role of regional economic development authorities appear to becoming increasingly important. Such authorities have often taken a leadership role in partnership development in Britain (as in the cities of Glasgow and Hull), which have extended learning strategies. In this context, it is important that social and cultural dimensions of development receive equal attention to the economic dimension, so that integrated strategies for development evolve which build on the interdependencies between the economic, social, and cultural domains.

Access and equity

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions on access and equity from the case studies. In most cases comprehensive information on participation and attitudes to learning was not available—although several studies were in progress, and will provide valuable information.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that significant access issues remained for groups such as deprived and homeless youth, older people, long term unemployed and people in remote locations. While adult and community education has been active in each of the areas studied in extending learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups, we were also made aware of funding constraints that limited further development of learning opportunities for non-participants.

The Ballarat case study identified as a key issue the separation of the educational 'haves' from the 'have nots,' with quite different participation rates for the two groups. This theme was echoed in various ways in the other studies, and in our review of international literature and trends. This polarisation poses a stark threat to the notion of a democratic inclusive society.

Nevertheless, we observed examples in all these locations of learning opportunities being extended, through the work of community based providers such as the Hunter Region WEA, in equity programs related to employment and schooling. Such programs have reached disaffected young people, unemployed migrants, Aboriginal adults and others previously not involved in adult education, opening up pathways for lifelong learning. How to extend these opportunities is a central challenge.

General comment

The case studies have identified a number of themes and issues, relevant to progressing lifelong learning in Australia, which require further examination in other contexts. These include the barriers and roadblocks discussed above as well as emerging community based strategies for social and economic development in which the learning process is central to successful outcomes.

The studies suggest the potential of the learning community approach as a means for building strategic partnerships for economic, educational, social and cultural purposes while also pointing to barriers that need to be addressed in progressing these objectives. It was evident from the studies overall that the path to a learning society in Australia will not be an easy one and that substantial cultural change will need to be achieved to progress this necessary aspiration.

This conclusion also suggests the value of collaborative strategies such as the Learning City/Learning Region approach which build the necessary strategic partnerships while also stimulating cultural change and fostering a shared vision of something better.

In addition to the barriers, it is possible to draw from the studies some of the conditions necessary to progress lifelong learning in learning communities. These include the role of connective leadership in forging the necessary linkages and partnerships and ensuring that things happen. Empowering local communities is a further necessary condition and administrative and other

barriers identified in the studies which impair this process will need to be addressed.

Perhaps above all, the studies point to the need for a revolution in Australian society in attitudes to learning in the emerging conditions of the 21st century. If knowledge is the most fundamental resource in a modern capitalist economy and learning the most important process, policies and strategies which harness and build on these critical resources will be essential.

Issues exposed in the case studies will require further examination if the potential of a learning led revitalisation of regional communities is to be achieved. The studies suggest that VET institutions can be significant players in this process of renewal and revitalisation. This will require integrated strategies which link economic, educational, social and cultural objectives and which go beyond narrowly defined instrumental objectives.

Such strategies will build on the interdependencies that exist between the many contexts and forms of learning so that outcomes are value added for stakeholders. In recognising the interplay between all forms of learning, and the 'dance of knowledge,' we will progress towards a learning society in which personal fulfilment, employability, social cohesion, and economic success are equally valued and furthered.

Notes

1 Devonport study, p.68.
2 Ibid, pp.68–69.
3 For this concept see Asheim, B 1996, *Learning Regions in a Global World Economy*, Paper presented at the European Urban and Regional Studies Conference, Exeter, April 1996.
4 Christine Martinez, in a study on Industry Clusters undertaken for the Hunter Regional Development Organisation (*Industry clusters: Competitive advantage through innovation*, Industry Cluster Studies No. 1, July 1998), recognised that industry clusters could be seen as learning systems and that cluster learning could be used to develop regional learning networks as an innovation strategy.

Albury-Wodonga

Profile of area

Albury-Wodonga is a region richly endowed with educational resources. At the same time, as twin cities balanced on either side of a State border, the region illustrates tensions between the aspirations of a local community to manage these resources in optimal ways which serve the socio-economic development of the region, and sectoral divisions arising from the organisation and funding of the sectors of post-secondary education under the Australian federal system.

The interplay of community aspirations for co-operative regional development and tensions arising from the organisation of education and training under the Australian federal system is the central theme illustrated by this case study. This theme is relevant to the advancement of lifelong learning for all and the transition of Australia to a Learning Society in the emerging socio-economic conditions of the 21st century.

At the same time, Albury-Wodonga provides an instructive case study in the outcomes of planned regional development based on a growth centre concept in the period since 1973. Albury-Wodonga was the only planned regional growth centre of the Whitlam era that was maintained across State boundaries with a Commonwealth/State infrastructure, including a Ministerial Council, beyond the period of NURDA and the Cities Commission.

While the outcomes have been less than had been anticipated in 1973, the experience of Albury-Wodonga illustrates themes and issues in regional development that are relevant to the development of Australia as a Learning Society providing lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The capacity of Albury-Wodonga for innovation of national significance was further illustrated in September 1998 when the City of Wodonga declared itself a Learning City: the first in Australia. In addition, Wodonga Institute of TAFE is taking action to develop as a learning organisation.

The two cities

Albury-Wodonga are twin cities some five kilometres apart, divided by the Murray River which forms the New South Wales and Victorian border. The two cities, while sharing the resources of a common region, differ in their histories and pattern of development; there are also cultural differences that reflect these factors and their location in adjoining States with distinctive traditions and arrangements.

At the same time, the two cities comprise the hub of a region, and economic development over the past three decades has inevitably linked the cities more

closely with common interests and a shared regional development agenda. This shared association for economic development has been fostered by the activities of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation which was established by the co-operating governments in 1974 to promote the Albury-Wodonga growth centre, and its successor body in economic development, Investment Albury-Wodonga.

Albury as the larger and longer-established of the cities. It has a rich history linked to pastoral and agricultural development in the southern Riverina region, and may be seen as having the status and role of an older brother.

Wodonga, on the other hand, has had a more recent pattern of development, and now has a population growth rate that exceeds Albury. Wodonga is now the fastest growing regional centre in Victoria, and population projections suggest that the population of Wodonga will exceed that of Albury early next century.

Population statistics for Albury and Wodonga over the period 1986 to 1996 are given in tables 1 and 2. These show that:

- Wodonga City achieved a 30.9% population growth between 1986 and 1996, to an estimated population of 30 700
- Albury City achieved a 7.5% population growth during these years, to an estimated population of 42 080
- Albury-Wodonga had a population growth of 16.1% in this period, to an estimated population of 97 090, with Albury-Wodonga at the upper and of the major provincial centres compared in table 1

Table 1: Resident population trends–Major provincial centres

Centre	Census 1986	Census 1991	Estimate 1996p	Increase 1986–1996	
				Nos	% change
Greater Geelong (parts A, B & C)	170 219	181 277	184 988	14 769	8.7
Coffs Harbour (3)	52 450	62 660	70 330	17 880	34.1
Albury-Wodonga statistical district	83 620	91 235	97 090	13 470	16.1
Bendigo statistical district	73 700	80 807	84 791	11 091	15.0
Ballarat statistical district	74 298	75 970	77 555	3257	4.4
Greater Sheparton	50 730	52 752	55 286	4556	9.0
Bathurst-Orange statistical district	64 660	68 860	73 760	9100	14.1
Wagga Wagga	50 380	54 220	57 750	7370	14.6
Mildura	41 506	44 537	46 630	5124	12.3
Dubbo City	31 040	33 860	36 940	5900	19.0
Tamworth (3)	45 130	47 830	49 820	4690	10.4

Table 2 also points to the significance of the rural shires surrounding Albury-Wodonga in fostering life long learning in this region. Few of the towns and villages in these shires have post-school education facilities; that how to foster lifelong learning in the towns and villages in these shires adjacent to Albury-Wodonga is therefore one of the key issues to be addressed in this region.

Table 2: Albury-Wodonga statistical district in greater detail

Centre	Census 1986	Census 1991	Estimate 1996p	Increase 1986–1996 Nos	Increase 1986–1996 % change
Albury-Wodonga statistical district	83 620	91 235	97 090	13 470	16.1
New South Wales side					
Albury City	39 160	40 560	42 080	2920	7.5
Hume Shire	5690	6580	7130	1440	25.3
Total	44 850	47 140	49 210	4360	9.7
Victorian side					
City of Wodonga	23 469	27 200	30 730	7261	30.9
Indigo Shire	12 975	14 338	14 660	1685	13.0
Towong Shire (Part A)	2326	2557	2490	164	7.1
Total	38 770	44 095	47 880	9110	23.5
Urban Albury-Wodonga	62 629	67 760	72 810	10 181	16.3
Rural shires	20 991	23 475	24 280	3289	15.7

Notes: 1 Preliminary estimates released by ABS for 1996.
2 Significant changed occurred in boundaries in Victoria due to municipal restructuring in 1994. The above figures for Victoria reflect these changes.
3 In NSW, 'Tamworth' is the sum of Tamworth City and surrounding Parry Shire. 'Coffs Harbour' includes Coffs Harbour City and Bellingen Shire.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Catalogue no. 3203.2 and 3210.1.

Industry development

Industry in Albury-Wodonga has grown over the past three decades from an historical base in rural industry to a diversified economy that associates traditional rural industries with manufacturing, tourism, health and education services and retailing.

The twin cities have above-average per capita ratios in manufacturing, retailing, and public administration. At the same time they continue their more traditional role as a rural hub for sheep, wool, beef, dairying, wine, timber, and grains. This growth has transformed Albury-Wodonga into a major regional business centre with a high potential for future development and with a broad industrial and employment base that is more typical of a metropolitan city than a regional centre.

This diversification of economic development has been stimulated by the activities of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation since 1974 and its successor bodies in the economic development area. There has been significant growth in post-secondary educational services in the two cities over this period, so that education is now regarded as a major stimulator of economic activity in the region. The quality of health and education services is regarded as a prime incentive to attract further investment in the region, as well as the overall quality of life afforded by the area. Albury-Wodonga now offers urban living with an economy based upon a diverse range of industries.

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Several commercial precincts have been put in place to further this development: Wodonga Business Park, and the Thurgoona Centre which incorporates a campus of Charles Sturt University.

The extent of diversification of the economic base of Albury-Wodonga is reflected in table 3 and figure 1, which show changes in the employment profile between 1977 and 1996. By 1996 Albury-Wodonga had above national average employment shares in sectors such as manufacturing, accommodation and restaurants, government administration/defence, education, health and community services and retailing.

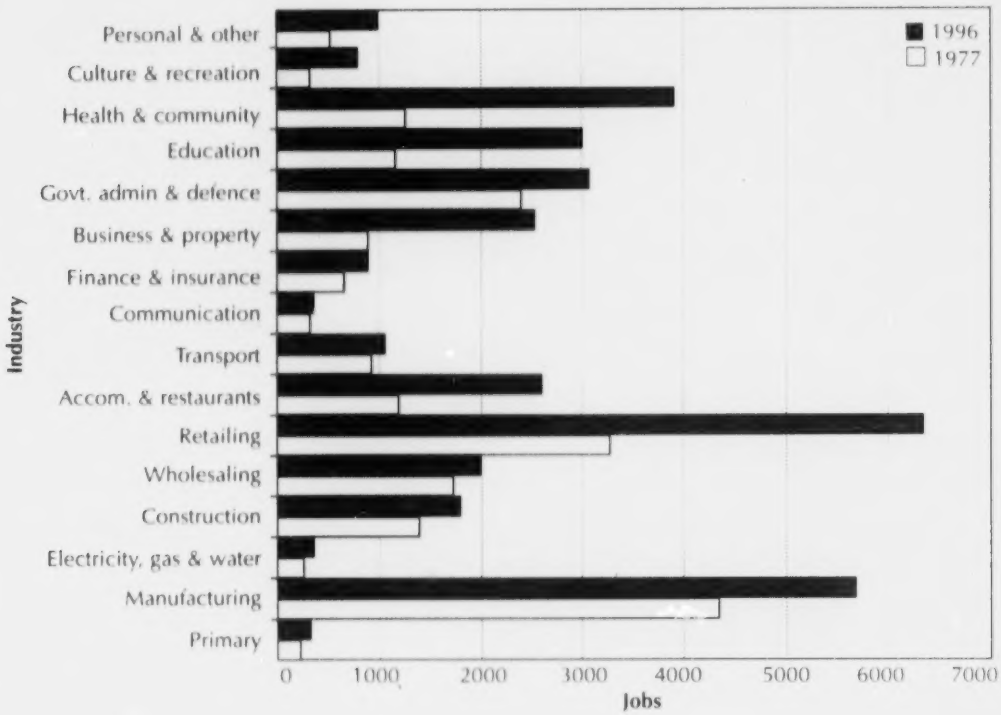
Table 3: Employment industry profile: Urban Albury-Wodonga and Australia

	Albury-Wodonga				Australia	
Category	1977 Jobs	1977 % share	1996 Jobs	1996 % share	1977–96 %P A growth	1996 % share
Total industry						
Primary	209	1.0	278	0.8	1.5	6.0
Manufacturing	4351	20.8	5791	16.1	1.5	13.5
Electricity, gas & water	238	1.1	336	0.9	1.8	0.8
Construction	1411	6.7	1826	5.1	1.4	6.9
Wholesaling	1714	8.2	2005	5.6	0.8	5.7
Retailing	3297	15.7	6399	17.8	3.6	14.9
Accommodation & rests	1187	5.7	2600	7.2	4.2	4.7
Transport	944	4.5	1088	3.0	0.7	4.6
Communication	324	1.5	349	1.0	0.4	2.0
Finance & insurance	656	3.1	901	2.5	1.7	3.8
Business & property	922	4.4	2553	7.1	5.5	9.9
Govt. admin & defence	2438	11.8	3101	8.6	1.3	5.2
Education	1145	5.5	2974	8.3	5.2	7.0
Health & community	1281	6.1	3943	11.0	6.1	9.3
Culture & recreation	323	1.5	804	2.2	4.9	2.1
Personal & other	497	2.4	1016	2.8	3.8	3.6
Total	**20 937**	**100.0**	**35 964**	**100.0**	**2.9**	**100.0**
of which						
Private	14 627	69.9	26 531	73.8	3.2	80.6
Government	8310	30.1	9413	26.2	2.1	19.4
Male	13 698	65.4	19 612	54.6	1.9	57.0
Female	7239	34.6	16 332	45.4	4.4	43.0
Full-time	18 528	88.5	24 186	67.3	1.4	75.0
Part-time	2409	11.5	11 758	32.7	8.7	25.0

Notes: The Albury-Wodonga series covers only urban areas and most rural activities are excluded.
'Primary' - agriculture and mining activities.

Source: Albury-Wodonga - DAW 2000 - Employment census. Australia - ABS Catalogue no. 6203.0.

Figure 1: Change in employment by industry–Urban Albury–Wodonga 1977–1996



Regional development

Economic and social development in Albury-Wodonga has been guided since 1974 by the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation and the successor bodies established to promote economic development.

The Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation was established in 1974 under co-operative arrangements involving the Commonwealth and the New South Wales and Victorian Governments. The co-operative arrangements included a Ministerial Council comprising the relevant Ministers from the three governments.

The Corporation established a social planning unit from its inception in 1974, and between 1974 and 1986 commissioned 75 reports in the area of social planning, 52 of these undertaken externally and 23 internally.[1]

The strong interest in social planning meant that education was inevitably regarded as a major interest of the Corporation—and it benefited from this interest.

Other actions of the Corporation were, however, controversial—and the Albury City Council persistently questioned the Corporation's strategies, claiming growth in Albury was being stifled to achieve growth in Thurgoona and Wodonga.[2]

Controversy over the role and strategies of the Corporation eventually led to decisions by the stakeholder governments to restrict the Corporation to land development, and then to wind up its activities. Economic development then

became the responsibility of Development Albury-Wodonga 2000, the Albury-Wodonga Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Albury-Wodonga. These bodies were then merged to establish Investment Albury-Wodonga, the body currently responsible for economic development promotion in the region. Investment Albury-Wodonga is jointly funded by the Albury and Wodonga City Councils.

While the history of efforts at co-operative regional economic development since 1974 is a mixed one in terms of aspirations and outcomes, there is little doubt that education has benefited, and Albury-Wodonga now has rich resources across the sectors of education and training.

The effort put into planned regional development since 1974 has had the consequence of developing a web of relationships between the participating organisations and institutions that is relevant to furthering lifelong learning in the region.

Education

Albury-Wodonga is richly endowed with educational resources. These include:

- 21 secondary schools: 12 government, six non-government, and three special
- two TAFE institutions: Wodonga Institute of TAFE and Albury Campus of Riverina Institute of TAFE
- two university campuses: La Trobe in Wodonga and Murray Campus of Charles Sturt University in Albury
- the Continuing Education Centre, which provides adult and continuing education across the region
- the Army Logistic Training Centre, which at present is run in conjunction with Wodonga TAFE
- vocational training centres, conducted by Wodonga TAFE in Corryong and Mt Beauty, with additional delivery centres in Beechworth, Rutherglen, Tallangatta, and Myrtleford
- private providers, including the Australian Industry Group and the Albury-Wodonga Business Enterprise Centre

A central feature of this provision is the way in which it reflects the sectoral divisions of the Australian federal system. The Continuing Education Centre is the only community based provider in the region with a mandate to serve both Albury and Wodonga. The two TAFE institutions relate to their state systems and reflect the administrative and cultural differences between the two systems. In a similar way, the two university campuses relate to central administrations of these two universities in Melbourne and Bathurst and reflect the orientations of the metropolitan based La Trobe University and the regional Charles Sturt University.

The interplay of local community aspirations and the structural diversions of Australian education and training have been expressed in a number of issues which have attracted attention in recent years and which have focussed, in particular, upon the TAFE sector. The experience of Albury-Wodonga in addressing these issues is relevant to the future progress of the region towards the provision of lifelong learning opportunities for all in a Learning Society.

TAFE institutions

The relations of the Wodonga Institute of TAFE and the Albury Campus of the Riverina Institute of TAFE reflect the interface and interaction of the two State TAFE systems with differing philosophies and administrative arrangements. Whereas Wodonga Institute has substantial autonomy and is governed by a local board, the Albury Campus of Riverina TAFE relates back to its Institute administration in Wagga and then to the TAFE central administration in Sydney, in a system with less devolution to individual Institutes than is the case in Victoria.

While these differences have raised issues, efforts have been made to achieve agreements between the two institutions to facilitate co-ordinated development. These efforts led to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the two institutions in November 1996, which provided for a co-operative approach between the two Institutes in furthering the four key strategies of the national VET system: responsiveness, quality, accessibility, efficiency.
The MOU profiles the provision and strengths of each Institute, and establishes the principle that the two Institutes will, as far as possible, work towards the development of complimentary profiles. The MOU also provides for co-operation in joint activities.

In addition to this development, Riverina Institute of TAFE has forged a MOU with Charles Sturt University and is currently negotiating a co-operative agreement/MOU with La Trobe University. In these ways a web of co-operative relationships is evolving in Albury-Wodonga.

Consolidated VET provision?

While these MOUs represent a worthwhile step towards strengthened co-operation and partnership, they still left unresolved issues relating to community ownership of VET provision serving the region.

This led to the Mayors of the two City Councils signing a joint letter to the Premiers of Victoria and New South Wales in November 1997 urging a joint review by the two states to explore the benefits of consolidating the provision of VET through a single governance and structure that is 'of the region and for the region.'[3]

This letter took the view that rural education provision must include

- local decision making,
- local input to major planning decisions, and
- ownership through local industry, business and the community.

At the present this matter is unresolved. It illustrates, however, the issues involved in the tensions between state systemic perspectives and local community aspirations. Progressing to a Learning Society will require that these tensions are addressed.

Continuing Education Centre

An important resource for extending lifelong learning opportunities in the region resides in the role of the Continuing Education Centre (CEC). The Centre

was established in 1974 and is the only community based provider with a mandate to serve both Albury and Wodonga through the provision of adult and community education. This means that the Centre is required to relate to two State systems and to seek funding from a number of sources.

CEC has been innovative in extending adult and continuing education through the region. In 1997 the Centre achieved 10 508 enrolments in 600 courses, and extended partnerships with a range of educational and community bodies. The Centre operates with links to a number of Affiliated Centres in regional areas adjacent to Albury-Wodonga. The Affiliated Centres operate in towns such as Chiltern, Rutherglen, Culcairn, Holbrook and Howlong. The learning needs of older citizens are met through the Albury School for Seniors, while the newly formed Peninsula Lifelong Learning Group reflects a direct recognition of lifelong learning in a network serving a transient population in an area without a town base.

While CEC is clearly an important resource in extending lifelong learning in this region, issues relating to such matters as funding, relations with other providers, the role of technology, and serving remote communities remain to be addressed further in the transition to a Learning Society.

Post secondary education as a vital industry

A further step in a co-operative partnership approach to education in the region occurred in 1997 where the Albury and Wodonga City Councils issued a joint declaration on Post-Secondary Education as a Vital Industry for Albury-Wodonga and the Region.

This joint dedication recognised that the work of educational institutions in the region, by incorporating commercial and civic dimensions in addition to the educational roles, were seen as including support for areas such as economic development, social infrastructure, provision of skilled workforce, employment opportunities, and social justice.

The joint declaration of the two Councils represents a further step in the evolution of co-operative partnership arrangements in the region that will underpin the expansion of lifelong learning opportunities.

Strengthening partnership and linkages

The developments discussed above may be viewed as steps towards the strengthening of partnership and linkages between the sectors of education and training and local community agencies and organisations such as the two City Councils and Investment Albury-Wodonga. This process builds social capital for the region, and lays a necessary foundation of the extension of lifelong learning opportunities and the development of Albury-Wodonga as a learning community to underpin both economic and social development.

This process of building partnership is facilitated by the close community relationships that exist in regional centres such as Albury-Wodonga. However, this process was also furthered by the role of the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation and, more recently, by the role of Investment Albury-Wodonga.

Investment Albury-Wodonga is seeking to further this process of building linkages and co-operation through the establishment of a network of Industry Focus Groups. Industry Focus Groups are intended to grow partnerships and build networks, and bring about the necessary cultural change to underpin this process including the fostering of trust and common understandings.

Education has been recognised as a key industry through the establishment of an Education Focus Group, which associates all the education stakeholders. The Focus Group is still at an early stage in its work, but could be an instrument for furthering strategic partnerships that could extend lifelong learning opportunities in the region. However, there are grounds for believing that much would be gained through strengthened formal mechanisms for co-operation. This might go along with some formal investigation into the rationalisation of provision in order to give greater choice to the community in widening lifelong learning opportunities.

Wodonga Institute of TAFE as a learning organisation

A distinctive feature of the Albury-Wodonga situation is the commitment of the Wodonga Institute of TAFE to develop as a learning organisation, making the Institute one of the few TAFE institutions in Australia with this explicit orientation and commitment.

This commitment is reflected in the Strategic Plan of the Institute for 1998-99, in both the vision statement of the plan and in the six key directions identified in the plan.

The vision of the Institute is expressed in the following terms:

> *A resourceful learning-driven organisation growing with the region and delivering educational services which have valuable employment, economic and social outcomes.*

This vision is then given effect through six key directions:

- Promote education and training for work and life.
- Establish and maintain a strong market focus.
- Provide a balanced and diverse range of educational services.
- Demonstrate leadership in the provision of education and training.
- Strengthen the greater Albury-Wodonga region economically, socially and environmentally.
- Build an effective learning organisation.

This vision statement and set of directions is of interest in the broad approach taken to the economic, social, educational, and cultural roles of the Institute in serving its community. It involves a clear recognition of the necessary social underpinning of economic performance and the multiple complementary objectives that a TAFE institution can serve. This integration of economic, social, educational, and cultural objectives provides a necessary foundation for the transition to a learning society in the emerging socio-economic conditions of the 21st century.

The innovative approach to its role and mission reflects the leadership that the executive of the Institute has provided, building on international experience, and which is being carried forward by the newly appointed Director of the Institute.

Wodonga as a Learning City

A parallel and complimentary development to the role of the Wodonga Institute as a learning organisation resides in the interest of Wodonga City Council in developing as a Learning City.

This interest led to the City of Wodonga in September 1998 declaring itself a Learning City, the first in Australia.

Development as a Learning City will provide a basis for integrated economic, social and cultural development of the city and its region. It will in this way facilitate social transformation in line with the emerging conditions of the 21st century, responsible citizenship, and economic development.

In declaring itself a Learning City, Wodonga has set itself a number of goals:

- the provision of an integrated and coherent framework for the development of learning related initiatives
- the facilitation of collaborative arrangements for the development of such arrangements
- the exploration of the concept of the Wired or Electronic city and its usefulness for the progress of education, business and the community
- research into the creation of a 'knowledge or Technology Park' as a focal point of attraction and establishment of knowledge based industries
- support for the enhancement of links between lifelong learning and cultural organisations such as libraries, museums, arts organisations
- the provision of opportunities for lifelong learning and the encouragement of participation and access within all the possibilities

A planning team has been established by the City of Wodonga to develop an action agenda in addressing these goals. This innovative action by the City of Wodonga could hold significant lessons for towns and cities elsewhere in Australia.

Rural and remote areas

The cities of Albury and Wodonga are surrounded by a number of small communities in towns and villages located in the adjacent shires. At present these communities are served in varying ways by Albury-Wodonga based providers, but in general there is less access to lifelong learning opportunities than exists in the two cities.

The growing role of modern learning technologies provide ways of extending lifelong learning opportunities into these communities. State systems, such as the Virtual Campus in Victoria and the complementary learning network project, are in various stages of development and implementation, but they offer significant opportunities to extend access to education and training on a lifelong basis.

While provision has been extended to centres such as Corryong and Mt Beauty, the opportunity now exists to develop distributed learning networks that will expand significantly lifelong learning opportunities for these communities.

General comment

The Albury-Wodonga study illustrates the tensions that can exist between the aspirations of a local community for co-operative regional development and the sectoral organisation of education and training under the Australian federal system. These tensions need to be addressed in progressing to a learning society with lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The study also shows the value of local co-operative strategies and points to the potential of an integrated regional development model, which integrates economic, social and educational development, in progressing towards lifelong learning opportunities for all. Such strategies foster linkages between educational, social, economic and cultural development, and so provide for achieving synergies between these dimensions of development leading to value added outcomes. Building strategic partnerships is a key to progressing as a prosperous learning community.

There is much in the Albury-Wodonga situation that could be built on to further Albury-Wodonga as a learning community with a culture of continuous improvement and on-going development.

However, the history of development efforts over the past thirty years also points to the need for a shared vision to give direction and coherence to co-operative action, and the requirement for a catalyst to stimulate partnership action. At present, Investment Albury-Wodonga is well placed to exercise this role through its focus groups in collaboration with the two City Councils and the education institutions of the region.

Such a pattern of development towards fostering a learning community has been common in Britain over the past decade, where cities such as Liverpool, Sheffield, and Edinburgh have developed strategies for integrated development as Learning Cities through coalitions that have included local government bodies, development agencies, and education institutions.[4]

While Albury-Wodonga is well placed to build on its rich educational endowment, and to progress as a competitive learning community that provides personal fulfilment, social cohesion, and economic prosperity for its citizens, the issues identified in this study will need to be addressed. This will require commitment, leadership, and a partnership process that engenders a shared vision of Albury-Wodonga as a learning community with lifelong learning opportunities for all. The aspirations of Wodonga City Council for Wodonga to develop as a learning city, and of Wodonga Institute of TAFE to be a learning organisation, could be key influences on future development.

Notes

1 Department of Local Government and Administrative Services 1986, *Regional development 1986: Albury-Wodonga experience*, AGPS, Canberra.
2 *The Border Mail*, Border Business Review, 25 June 1998.
3 Cr. Graham Crapp & Cr. Patricia Gould, letter to the Hon Jeffrey Kennet and the Hon Robert Carr, 27 November 1997.
4 Department for Education and Employment 1994, *Learning towns: Learning cities*, DfEE Publications, Sudbury.

Ballarat

Profile of area

Background

Ballarat is a major provincial city of approximately 80 000 people, situated in the Central Highlands region of Victoria. It is linked to the state capital, Melbourne, by a 110 kilometre four-lane divided highway, giving access to the Melbourne Central Business District and Melbourne's Tullamarine airport in a little over an hour. It is regarded as a major gateway to other parts of Victoria, being an important hub at the intersection of the Western Highway, the Midland Highway, the Glenelg Highway and the Sunraysia Highway. The city is well served by V/Line's rail and coach services to Melbourne and other important regional centres, including Ararat, Bendigo, Castlemaine, Dimboola, Geelong, Hamilton, Hopetoun, Horsham, Mildura, and Warrnambool.

Although pastoralists had operated near the site of Ballarat since 1838, the city itself was established following the discovery of gold in 1851, and many of its ornate and substantial public and private buildings may be traced back to the wealth generated during the gold rushes. It established itself then as a tolerant, cosmopolitan and cultured city—a reputation which has endured to this day. The site of the Eureka uprising in 1854, Ballarat has etched itself into Australia's history as an icon of democratic values, and indeed it was highly influential in the moves that led to the establishment of Federation in Australia. It has an impressive sense of civic pride, and a significance well beyond its immediate region.

The city enjoys excellent medical, educational, cultural and recreational services and facilities; this. combined with its proximity to Melbourne and various attractions including the Grampians, the Great Ocean Road and wine growing regions, makes it attractive to an unusually broadly-based and well-educated population.

Demography

As at June 1997, Ballarat had a population of 79 630. This compares with its population of 77 180 in 1986. Population growth rates in Ballarat have tended to be below the average for Victoria, and for country Victoria, over that period—although there was a very slight increase of 0.7% in the 1996–7 year. Population is not expected to increase dramatically in the future, with a projected total of only 89 300 by the year 2021. Around 89% of Ballarat's population was Australian-born, significantly higher than the State average of 73%.

Ballarat's role as a major centre for tertiary education is reflected in the fact that 12.5% of residents were aged 18–24 in 1996–7, compared with 8.7% overall for country Victoria and 10.4% for the State as a whole. This concentration of young people also has an effect on median household incomes, which, at $27 530 per annum, were considerably lower than for Victoria as a whole ($33 580). The proportion of Ballarat residents who were renting (25%) is greater than for both country Victoria and Victoria as a whole; again reflecting the City's role as a centre of education with a transient student population.

Of the total population, 47% (or 37 200) were in the labour force. Ballarat showed a much lower proportion of Managers and Administrators than for the rest of Victoria (6.5% as compared with 9.5%), while Professionals at 17.6% were much higher than for country Victoria generally (14.2%). Most other categories were roughly comparable with State averages. On the whole Ballarat is well qualified, with 38% of adults having some sort of post-compulsory educational qualifications; Engineering (17%), Health (14%) and Education (11%) were the most popular fields of study. Not unexpectedly, Ballarat had higher proportions of university level qualifications than country Victoria generally, but lower than the state averages, especially for higher degrees (0.9% compared with 1.3%), and bachelor degrees (6.0% as opposed to 8.4%).

Unemployment for the June quarter of 1998 stood at 13.8%, which was considerably higher than the State average of 8.1%. However, this is perhaps inflated because the city tends to attract people seeking employment and, in any case, it represents a significant improvement over the early 1990s when unemployment peaked at around 19%.

Industries

Ballarat has a varied employment base. In September 1997, the most important employment sectors were Manufacturing (19.2% of all jobs), Retail (15.9%), Health and Community Services (13.4%) and Education (10.4%). Tourism is an important part of the local economy, with significant numbers of people engaged in Accommodation, Food Services and Cultural & Recreational Services (9.8% in total). These figures reflect the City's importance as a major regional centre for a range of services. It has several major employers, including Ballarat Goldfields, Bendix Mintex, Coles Myer, Eureka Tiles, Hakubaku Noodles, Haymes Paints, IBM Global Services, Laminex Industries, Mars Confectionery, McCain Foods, Rivers (Australia), Sovereign Hill Historical Park and Selkirk Bricks. The recent closure of the production division of Timken Bearings was an unwelcome piece of news in an already fragile local economy.

Ballarat is actively promoting itself as a major centre for Information Technology and Telecommunications (IT&T). In 1995, the City put in place a strategy for IT development with a focus upon the following sectors: interactive multimedia software, geographic information systems, health sector IT, and Government and private sector outsourcing. Central to these plans is the Ballarat Technology Park, a 29-hectare site adjacent to the Campus of the University of Ballarat. The Park has established optical fibre and network capabilities; its two major tenants are IBM Global Services, and the Greenhill Enterprise Centre—itself a multi-user facility with a number of tenants oriented to the IT&T industry. The Enterprise Centre, which is managed by the University of Ballarat, is potentially a vital component of both educational and economic development in the City.

Community development

As previously noted, Ballarat enjoys an exceptional level of civic pride, with many community events of regional and even State-wide significance. The Royal South Street musical competitions, the Begonia Festival, Organs of the Ballarat Goldfields, Springfest and Winterfest all attract participants from far and wide—and there is strong pressure to convert the annual Eureka commemorative walk on the first Sunday in December into a national day of remembrance. It is reasonably easy to obtain support for valued community development initiatives, although there seems to be a polarisation between the unemployed or under-employed segments of the community and those who are in employment. The local newspaper—*The Ballarat Courier*—is extremely supportive and often provides sponsorship or at least subsidised publicity for worthy causes.

Recent history

Like many other Australian regional centres, Ballarat has experienced a steady and at times dramatic reduction in the level of government services, and withdrawal of commercial support—including the closure of major bank branches. The recent closure of a major manufacturing plant—Timken Bearings—caused not only a direct loss of jobs, but also an indirect multiplier effect with the reduction in demand for retail, real estate, educational, recreational and other services. It is, of course, hoped that the expansion of existing enterprises such as Freighters Australia Pty Ltd, and the development of new businesses, particularly in IT-related industries, will provide new job opportunities, as has already occurred in the case of IBM Global Services. However, IT business tends to be a specialised field, and one in which large numbers of positions are unlikely. For this reason, the Council's economic development unit is actively pursuing other possibilities, especially in food processing, tourism and Call Centres. In addition, there is considerable pressure to redevelop Camp Street, from which the police and troopers marched out to confront the miners at Eureka in 1854, as an arts, education and heritage precinct. If successful, this initiative would help to regenerate an important part of the City's heart, and to bring life and vigour through visitors, students, and locals mingling in an exciting new development.

Infrastructure for economic and community development

Economic and business development

Ballarat has a number of groups dedicated to the development of its economy and business opportunities. Five in particular are worthy of notice:

- *Australian Industry Group (AIG)*

  According to its home page, 'the Australian Industry Group is an independent, representative body created by the merger of MTIA (Metal Trades Industry Association of Australia) and The Australian Chamber of Manufactures. It has been created to help Australian industry be more competitive, both domestically and internationally, so that it takes its rightful place in the emerging global economy. Representing some 11 500 companies, large and small, in every state and territory, the Australian Industry Group is the largest industry body in Australia by far. These

member companies provide more than $100 billion in output; employ more than 1 million people, and produce exports worth some $25 billion...

Building on the strengths and experiences of the two predecessor organisations, the Australian Industry Group takes the best from both to provide wider, better services to members and a stronger advocacy voice to government and the wider world. The Australian Industry Group represents its members and provides services in metropolitan and regional centres across Australia. With offices in Asia, combined with its strong connections internationally, the organisation is there on the ground to serve members' needs in an increasingly global community.'

Ballarat is fortunate to have one of the Regional Offices of AIG, through which members in the manufacturing sector have access to publications, training and advisory services in areas such as: international trade, industrial/employee relations and workforce strategies, environment energy and safety, representation in public policy issues, lobbying, surveys and research and communications.

- *Ballarat Business Enterprise Centre (BEC)*, in common with its network partners throughout Australia, has been set up 'to provide free, independent, confidential and competent advice, practical assistance and training to foster viable local enterprises, both in start-up and in general operation.' Formerly funded under the New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS), the Business Enterprise Centre is seeking alternative sources of funding in order to continue to provide its various services. These include: access to business advice and assistance; referral to local legal, accounting, marketing and other expertise; provision of both workshops and short courses on various aspects of business development and management; and provision of a range of relevant publications.
- *The Ballarat Chamber of Commerce* was established in 1852, one year after the discovery of gold, as a result of conflict between Ballarat East and Ballarat West over the lack of assistance to retailers wishing to establish and develop businesses in the area. The Chamber of Commerce has over 350 regular financial members drawn from the retail, commerce, hospitality and tourism industries. It has an Executive Officer, supported by an Executive Committee that meets monthly. The Chamber has a number of initiatives that are focussed toward the business community. These include the NZI Insurance Ballarat Business Awards, the 'Buy in Ballarat' strategy and the Ballarat Apprenticeship and Traineeship Service (BATS). The Chamber is represented on a number of community and strategically important committees, including the Victoria Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI), the Australian Industry Group (AIG), Business Ballarat, the City of Ballarat, State and Federal Governments and a broad range of industry representative bodies.
- *Business Ballarat* is the economic development arm of the City of Ballarat. The role of Business Ballarat is 'to increase the level of economic activity in Ballarat through the attraction of new investment to the City and the expansion of existing businesses.' It is also responsible for 'the development of an economic strategy for Ballarat which builds on the competitive strengths of the regional economy. These strengths have been identified as information technology and telecommunication, manufacturing, food processing and value adding to the wider region's

agricultural output, tourism, health, business and commerce and the City's unique heritage and lifestyle.' Business Ballarat was responsible for the 1995 publication *A strategy for IT industry development in the Ballarat region*, and the recently published *Ballarat economic profile*, 1998.

- *Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI)*, whose key role is 'to shape policies on behalf of business, either collectively or by size, industry or region, and to influence Governments and other parties to adopt these policies.' Although the organisation's headquarters are in Melbourne, the Ballarat office of VECCI is one of four key regional centres, the others being in Bendigo, Geelong and Traralgon. The benefits of membership are listed as: advice, awards, networking, policy and influence, information, discounts on a range of 'value-added products and services,' and school-to-work services. VECCI's business development activities are pursued through consulting, training and publications. Industry-specific advice and help is available through teams in the following industry sectors: aged care and disability services; building and construction; business services; health and education; human services; infrastructure; local government; manufacturing; metals; tourism and hospitality; transport and distribution, and wholesale.

In addition to these various organisations, Ballarat is fortunate to have an incubator centre as part of the University's Technology Park at Mt Helen. The *Greenhill Enterprise Centre (GEC)* is a multi-tenant facility, which takes start-up ventures, develops them through a staged process, and aims eventually to 'graduate' them as fully fledged operations with a greatly enhanced likelihood of commercial success. Being part of the University of Ballarat, which includes the TAFE Division, the Centre is able to offer students and staff, as well as members of the local community, excellent opportunities to commercialise their ideas and intellectual property. It conducts seminars and workshops on various aspects of enterprise development, and can also act as a bridge between the University and the wider business community. In this sense, it is a vital link in the lifelong learning of entrepreneurs and potential business developers.

Educational and learning support

The Ballarat area has 55 primary schools, of which 44 are Government Schools and 11 are privately run. There are also nine secondary schools, of which four are Government, and five are private. The standard of education available in the area is excellent, with strong academic, cultural and sporting programs. Several local schools are home to particularly dynamic IT-related programs; these include Ballarat & Clarendon College, Ballarat Secondary College and Sebastopol Secondary College. Music is also particularly vibrant in Ballarat, with strong school-level programs, the South Street Competition, a community-based Symphony Orchestra, and the Ballarat Academy of the Performing Arts—itself a joint endeavour of the University of Ballarat and the Australian Catholic University.

With the University of Ballarat, the Aquinas Campus of the Australian Catholic University, and the nearby Creswick Campus of the University of Melbourne, Ballarat is extremely fortunate in terms of provision for higher education. Together, these institutions provide an extraordinary range of undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing education programs and learning opportunities.

Ballarat boasts the oldest technical institute in Australia: the School of Mines and Industries Ballarat (SMB). Founded in 1870, it is the third oldest post-compulsory educational provider in Australia after the Universities of Sydney and Melbourne. It had a tertiary division, which eventually became the nucleus of the present University of Ballarat. On 1 January 1998, the School of Mines Ballarat was amalgamated (along with the Wimmera Institute of TAFE) to form the TAFE Division of the University of Ballarat, thus closing a circle which began 128 years earlier. The TAFE Division has a wide range of sub-degree programs, many of which are offered in workplace settings in conjunction with employers or industry groups.

In terms of Private Providers, Victoria arguably has more Registered Training Organisations than any other State. One of those which operates in Ballarat is the daSilva College of Business & Tourism Pty Ltd, which is registered as a Private Provider by the Victorian Office of TAFE. The College offers a range of courses for both Domestic and Overseas Students. According to its home page,

> *The College offers 'quality training at a competitive price' and seeks to provide a corporate environment conducive to the development of a professional attitude by all trainees... The College is committed to the welfare of its students and offers a Job Placement Assistance Scheme to all Domestic Graduates. An Ongoing Support System is available which provides graduates with a valuable link to the College, on completion of their studies.*

In addition to these formal education institutions, there is a diverse range of adult and community education providers. Of these, the foremost is BRACE, which describes itself as 'a professional and innovative community business committed to creating opportunities and delivering quality programs and services in Education, Training and Employment.' As explained on its home page,

> *BRACE is a not-for-profit community-based organisation operating in the Central Highlands and Wimmera region of Victoria. Established in Ballarat and operating since 1973, BRACE has delivered a wide range of education, training and employment services to thousands of people of all ages. BRACE is proud to support the whole community with services for youth, businesses, the disabled, the unemployed, people returning to study and general community interests. With service sites in Ballarat, Ararat, Stawell, Horsham and Bacchus Marsh, BRACE is one of the region's largest and most successful providers.*

Along with the historic library of the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute—one of the few institute libraries which continues to serve its local community—Ballarat has a large and well patronised city library, which is particularly noted for its outstanding local studies collection. With three branches, it has some 33 000 registered members, which represents about 42% of the local population. It registers approximately 400 000 loans per year, and caters not only to general readers, but also to serious hobbyists and 'cultural tourists' to the City.
In addition, perhaps because of its strong IT focus, Ballarat was fortunate in attracting funding from Multimedia Victoria to provide free Internet access and training to the Ballarat region. Through Multimedia Victoria, the Victorian State Government made funding available to Skills.net, which, in collaboration with the University of Ballarat, created Ballarat Online, operating out of the former public library building in the City centre. According to its home page,

Ballarat Online is a gateway point of contact for all things Internet in the Ballarat and Central Highlands Region. It is a community service that is not associated with any one local Internet Service Provider, but wants to support the overall development of Information Technology usage in our community.

The Ballarat Online facility is open 68 hours per week: 9.00 am to 9.00 pm weekdays, and 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm on weekends. In the nine months from 1 March to 30 November 1998, there were 702 Beginning Users, who each spent an average of 4.5 hours in the Centre (range: 2–15 hours), and 177 Advanced Users, who spent an average of 47 hours each (range: 16–129 hours). The Centre operates using Voluntary Trainers—38 in total with 16 currently active. The average time volunteered per week was 5.25 hours.

Many of these educational providers—both public and private—are bound together through the Ballarat Educational Network. Originally established to recruit overseas students, the Network has increased both its membership and its mandate to encompass a whole range of educational issues. In 1998, the Network sponsored a major educational Expo as part of Ballarat's Springfest. In conjunction with Business Ballarat, it also co-sponsored a public lecture on 'Ballarat as a Learning City,' and the subsequent formation of a Learning City TaskForce.

Participation and demand for learning

The 1996 Census reveals that, in that year, there was a total of 26.9% (or 20 570) Ballarat residents engaged in some form of formal education. This compares with 24.8% for Country Victoria and 24.7% for Victoria itself. In particular, Ballarat had a significantly higher proportion of University students: 5.1% compared with 2.2% for Country Victoria and 3.6% for Victoria overall. Interestingly, only 2.3% were pursuing TAFE studies compared to 2.5% state-wide. There are no statistics about participation in workplace based learning, but many local employers have elaborate and well used training facilities that are utilised for in-house training programs.

With respect to participation in non-vocational adult education, reliable statistics are notoriously difficult to find—but given the number and range of cultural organisations and facilities in the City, it seems likely that participation rates are at least equal to those experienced elsewhere in the State. As previously mentioned, Ballarat Online also provides residents with access to learning opportunities via the Internet.

Partnerships and linkages

Although Ballarat is subject to the same competitive pressures as other similarly-sized cities elsewhere, there does seem to be a genuine commitment to collaboration in the community's interests. As mentioned above, in an unusual and possibly unique example of cross-institutional and cross-sectoral collaboration, in July 1998 a well-attended public lecture on ëBallarat as a Learning City' was jointly sponsored by Business Ballarat and the Ballarat Education Network. This has led to the establishment of a Learning City TaskForce, with representation of various stakeholder groups, and the possibility of Ballarat becoming a designated or declared learning city. This would entail pooling resources, and possibly creating entirely new programs

and initiatives—such as a city-based information bureau about learning opportunities—for the benefit of the entire community.

Issues and challenges

The Ballarat Case Study echoes certain themes that have been found elsewhere in Australia, while at the same time throwing up some distinctive features. Particularly striking are the following issues:

- *The separation of the educational 'haves' from the 'have nots' and the quite different participation rates of the two groups.* Although it is something of an oversimplification, at times there seem to be two Ballarats: one well-educated, widely travelled and with plenty of disposable income, and the other under-educated, unemployed and battling to get by. Clearly, the learning needs, interests and capabilities of these two groups differ sharply, which poses a challenge to all educational providers, particularly those in the VET sector.
- *The impact of the current economic downturn on expenditure on work-related training.* Unfortunately, in times of economic stringency, many employers—especially in Small and Medium Enterprises—reduce their expenditure on training and development. This has the unfortunate effect of making their employees less flexible and their enterprises less competitive for the time when there is an upturn or change in circumstances.
- *The difficulties and challenges posed by attempts to identify pathways between TAFE and Higher Education.* As a dual-sector institution, the University of Ballarat employs a Pathways Project Officer, whose role is to negotiate discrete pathways for students wishing to move from the TAFE to the Higher Education Sector, or vice versa. Unfortunately, this has proven to be more difficult than originally expected, partly because of differences in course structures and funding arrangements, and partly because of ideological differences between TAFE and Higher Education. Considerably more work needs to be done before there is seamless articulation between various post-secondary providers.
- *The relative isolation of private VET providers from the debates and discourses within TAFE institutes, especially with respect to lifelong learning.* The profit motive, combined with the ideology of competitiveness, has tended to leave private providers outside the mainstream when it comes to considering broader educational and community issues. Although an attempt has been made by the Ballarat Education Network to include major private providers, at another level it is clearly felt to be an uncomfortable arrangement between competitors.
- *The potential for Ballarat Online to expand its reach and consequently its impact as a learning resource.* The position of Ballarat Online is presently somewhat ambiguous. Perhaps because of its location in the CBD, it is not regarded either as an information resource fully linked to the City Library, or as a major provider of educational opportunities linked to any recognised educational provider.
- *The relative attractiveness of Melbourne as opposed to Ballarat for young students,* and the consequent loss of some students to the 'bright lights.' This phenomenon is common to most provincial cities and country towns in Australia. It means that many educational providers—including the

TAFE Division of the University—tend to end up as feeders to other providers in major metropolitan institutions. Clearly this affects their ability to provide 'whole of life' access to learning, except for the opposite end of the spectrum, which is the relative immobility of some older students, and the consequent need to provide retraining or second-chance learning to people with limited basic education. Thus, lifelong education may be a reality, but the actual recipients vary across the lifespan.

- *The heavy—some might say excessive—emphasis by TAFE institutes on vocational competencies to the detriment or even the exclusion of other outcomes.* At least some of these outcomes, such as general learning competencies, employers say they want, but are often unwilling to pay for. As funding authorities have reduced Government subventions to TAFE providers, and forced them increasingly onto the open market, this has tended to lead to greater instrumentalism, and for such providers to militate against the development of broader educational missions including a commitment to lifelong learning. Counter-intuitively, it has even reduced the range of choices for some learners, in regional areas especially, who are channelled into low cost programs that do not necessarily meet their exact needs but are available from local providers.

Conclusion

If Australia is to become a truly clever country, and if it is to remain competitive in an increasingly global market place, lifelong learning must become the norm for all. Ballarat represents an outstanding—perhaps even a unique—social laboratory for the development of a commitment to learning for all, but this will necessitate both supply-side and demand-side initiatives if it is to become a reality. If it does, it could become the new gold-rush for Ballarat, but this time for what Jacques Delors has called *The treasure within:*

> *There is a need to rethink and broaden the notion of lifelong education. Not only must it adapt to changes in the nature of work, but it must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole human beings - their knowledge and aptitudes, as well as the critical faculty and ability to act. It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community.* (Delors 1996)

Devonport

Profile of area

Background

Devonport is a city of more than 22 000 people on the central North Coast of Tasmania. It is approximately 100 kilometres west of Launceston, and 270 kilometres north of the State capital, Hobart. The nearest point on the Australian mainland is Wilson's Promontory, which is some 220 kilometres away, and it is around 300 kilometres from Melbourne. It is a major maritime port, with seven berths handling both roll-on/roll-off container cargo and bulk goods including cement, wheat, oil and petroleum, tallow and LP Gas. Devonport is the Tasmanian terminal for the 'Spirit of Tasmania,' a large vehicular and passenger ferry which provides an overnight sea passage three times per week from Melbourne.

The airport, owned and operated by the Port of Devonport Authority, is about eight kilometres from the city centre. Several regional airlines operate daily services to the mainland, to the Bass Strait Islands, and to other parts of Tasmania. In 1992–93 the airport handled almost 120 000 passengers.

With respect to internal transport, Australian National Railways provides a twice-daily bulk freight service linking Devonport with Burnie, Launceston and Hobart. It is half an hour by road from Burnie, one and a quarter hours from Launceston, and three hours from Hobart. Being on National Highway No 1, the City enjoys excellent access to other parts of the State, with regular passenger coaches and freight services.

Within the city, there is a heavy emphasis on the use of motor cars for transport. A briefing document prepared by the Devonport Development Corporation in 1994 comments on 'the lack of an extensive public transport service and the high reliance on the motor car.' According to that report, 'it is also noticeable that the use of the bicycle is nearly twice the State average, probably as a result of the system of picturesque cycle/pedestrian tracks around the city.' It might also be that the relatively high rate of unemployment adversely affects people's ability or willingness to purchase or operate a motor car!

Demography

According to the 1996 Census, there were 22 299 residents in Devonport, of whom 51.9% (or 11 569) were female. By far the majority of the residents—19 587, or 87.8%—were Australian born, and an almost identical number spoke only English. The City is dominated by adults, with the majority being aged 15 or over (17 355 or 77.8%). There were only a small number of people of

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (738 or 3.3%), and although the proportion of skilled and semi-skilled workers was reasonably high, the proportion of university graduates was much lower, representing approximately half the State average. At 14.3%, unemployment was considerably higher than the Australian average.

Industries

Devonport and its immediate hinterland represent a vital component of Tasmania's economic wellbeing. The major industries in the area include Simplot, Australian Weaving Mills, Tascot Templeton Carpets, Australian Paper, Goliath Portland Cement, cardboard manufacturer Visy Board, and United Milk Tasmania.

The Devonport region is of national significance for the production of primary goods. Given the relatively small size of the municipality, it is very productive in beef and dairy cattle, sheep, cereals, fruit and vegetables. Most recently it has specialised in high quality 'clean green' agriculture and horticulture, including apple varieties suited to the Asian market, squash for Japan, cut flowers, vegetable seed production, new mushroom varieties and trial crops of green tea. About 10% of the Tasmanian fish landings come into Devonport, and while some is shipped to Hobart for canning, a similar amount of Orange Roughie (6000–7000 tonnes) is sent *from* Hobart to Devonport for processing. As the Development Corporation paper puts it, 'The place of agriculture in the local economy cannot be over-emphasised. It provides export earnings, is the basis for food processing industries, requires substantial transport services, and is the basis for much of Devonport's tertiary industry.'

Finally, there is an active retail and service sector in Devonport, with considerable investment in Tourism. Regrettably, however, many visitors pass through Devonport on their way to or from the mainland or other destinations in Tasmania and, because of the excellent road systems and relatively short distances involved, occupancy rates in local hotels and motels have fallen significantly from those expected or experienced in the past.

Community development

There is a strong sense of civic pride in the city, with an influential and aptly named local newspaper called *The Advocate*. Despite the city's many natural advantages, and its extensive infrastructure, there is a sense of frustration that it is often overlooked in favour of its neighbours to the East (Launceston) or the West (Burnie), when location decisions or government support are being considered.

Recent history

In common with most of Tasmania—Northwest Tasmania in particular—Devonport has experienced a prolonged economic downturn, with a decline in its traditional industries, and an inability to develop significant and sustainable new industries in their place. Although the threatened closure of the Australian Pulp and Paper mill has been averted for the time being, and despite the recent establishment of a new call centre for Watts Communications, it is hard to

escape the conclusion that the future looks somewhat bleak. The creation of new horticultural and agricultural products and markets is encouraging, but the general decline in the primary, secondary, and even tertiary industry sectors underlines the vital need for a skilled, adaptable and well-educated workforce, and makes Devonport a particularly appropriate site for the development of a 'learning community.'

Infrastructure for economic and community development

Economic and business development

Devonport has four principal consultative and advisory groups devoted to promoting its economic and business advancement. These are:

- An active and influential *Chamber of Commerce*. Established in 1940, it includes representatives of most major industry groups in the city. Its objectives, although laudable, sound a little dated by contemporary standards:
  - to watch over and protect the general interests of Commerce
  - to collect information on all matters of interest to the Mercantile Community
  - to use every means within its power for the removal and redress of grievances, and for the promotion of trade of the State
  - to communicate with the Authorities and with individuals thereupon
  - to form a code of practice whereby the transactions of business may be simplified and facilitated
  - to arbitrate on all matters submitted by disputants, the decision in such references to be recorded for future reference
- The *Devonport Development Corporation*, a major local lobby group and economic development forum.
- *Devonport Commercial Promotions*, a commercially oriented group intended to develop retail activity.
- Since 1990, the *Mersey Business Enterprise Centre* has been, amongst other projects, sponsoring an ambitious program to create $5 million worth of new jobs in the area. Among other services, it offers a job placement scheme open to both employers and potential employees, and provides seminars and other training opportunities for local businesses. According to its 1997–98 Annual Report, the objectives of the Centre are to:
  - implement a range of programs designed to enhance local economic development
  - identify local and regional constraints to economic and employment growth
  - enhance employment opportunities by extending practical assistance to small businesses and those who seek to establish such businesses
  - both advocate and promote the concept of local economic development to the advantage of the local community
  - identify opportunities in the Mersey area for employment creation, and promote the distribution of local resources to enhance these opportunities
  - carry out such activities in the pursuit of local economic development

Not unexpectedly in a relatively small community, there is a degree of overlapping membership of these various groups, and all the main players are well known to one another. Indeed, the question might be asked whether there is a need for several different groups, and whether this does not, in some senses, detract from the coherence of the City's economic development approach.

In addition, the Council has a Planning Section, and the Mayor—Councillor Geoff Squibb—is simultaneously a Member of the State's Legislative Council, with the result that he is very aware not only of local and regional, but of State and, to an extent, National, trends and issues. According to the recently published *Devonport City Council Five Year Strategic Plan: July 1998 to June 2003*, 'the Devonport City Council wishes to see Devonport develop as the professional, industrial, social and cultural hub of the North Coast of Tasmania.' However, the Plan is effectively silent on the issue of learning (or even education) as a principal element in any such vision.

Educational and learning support

In terms of compulsory schooling, Devonport is well served, with one Catholic and six Government Primary Schools, and one Catholic and two Government High Schools. For Years 11 and 12 there is a regional senior Secondary College—Don College.

With respect to post-compulsory education, as in many other parts of regional Australia, the principal educational provider for Devonport is the local TAFE Campus. However, the situation in Tasmania is complicated by the fact that, as from 1 January 1998, the formerly freestanding TAFE Institutes—including the Northwest College of TAFE—have been combined into a single statewide TAFE provider, styled 'TAFE Tasmania.' In 1996, there was a review of TAFE and Adult Education in Tasmania, as a result of which it was decided that the various Colleges of TAFE across the State should amalgamate to form a single integrated provider, in order to reduce competition between individual colleges, and to provide for economies of scale especially in curriculum development. It was decided to create a comprehensive organisation subdivided into five institutes, each serving a particular industry sector. These five are the Institute of Adult Education and Community Services, the Institute of Business, the Drysdale Institute (hospitality, tourism, hairdressing and beauty culture), the Institute of Industry, and the Institute of Natural Resources. Each Institute is headquartered in a different part of the State, with the Institute of Natural Resources being based in Devonport. However, program offerings of all five Institutes are available through Devonport, not simply those involved in fisheries, agriculture or food processing.

In September of 1996, during the review of TAFE provision, the Devonport Development Corporation (Devcorp), in a submission to the Minister for Education and Vocational Training, proposed that the then North West College of TAFE should become the 'Devonport Academy,' a private provider under the 1995 State Vocational Education and Training Act. It was argued that the Academy should remain under local governance, as it would then be directly responsive to the specific needs of local employers and industry groups. Clearly this was a fairly pragmatic and instrumental focus, and it was certainly not envisaged that it would have a broader community service mandate unless Government assistance was particularly provided. Notwithstanding TAFE

Tasmania's explicit commitment both to regional responsiveness, and to becoming a learning organisation, there is a strong feeling of the loss of control over the local TAFE facility, and a belief that programmatic decisions are now being made by faceless bureaucrats in Launceston, Hobart or even Canberra.

With respect to private providers, in nearby Ulverstone, North Western Group Training provides a range of vocational programs. Established in 1988 it is a progressive, non-profit company, 'providing a professional employment and training service to Tasmanian businesses and industry.' It provides both on-the-job and off-the-job vocational training, and liaises with other training providers and government agencies 'to meet the changing needs of business and industry.' It also employs apprentices and trainees, placing them in appropriate workplaces, whilst at the same time providing them with continuity of employment.

In terms of university level study, there is a small study centre of the University of Tasmania attended by about 150 students part-time. Because of the small number of university graduates in the district, however, it has proved difficult to find locally available staff members who are suitably qualified to offer university-level programs of study, and the study centre is scheduled to close.

Devonport has a branch of the State Library of Tasmania. Within the library, there is an excellently appointed and very accessible computer laboratory for use by members of the community, called 'Devonport Online Access Centre.' To quote the Access Centre's home page:

> *As part of the Tasmanian Communities Online project, the Centre provides the people of Devonport with free training and access to modern computer equipment and the Internet. It also provides support to micro-business to set up their own web page, allowing them to get started in the world of electronic commerce. The Devonport Online Access Centre is managed by the community and is staffed by a co-ordinator and a team of volunteers.*

The Centre is presently open 57 hours per week, and it is heavily used by people from all walks of life and sectors of the community. In the six months from June to November 1998, it attracted 1175 registered users, of whom 75% required one-to-one assistance. In addition to websurfing, email and other personal use, it helped a number of local businesses to gain access to the web and or to create home pages. However, notwithstanding its success, many people are sceptical of its ability to become self-funding when the original Government subsidy runs out; the irony is that a community which has the greatest need of such a service also has the least ability to pay for it locally.

Overall, it would not be an exaggeration to say that, if these various business and educational groups could be encouraged to collaborate—and especially if the local media were supportive—there would be considerable potential for Devonport to become a learning community.

Participation and demand for learning

Demand for adult learning is notoriously difficult to estimate, as statistics are not usually available. However, it can usefully be thought of as including demand for formal education—TAFE and university—demand for workplace-based learning, and demand for non-vocational adult education including access to the Internet.

Unfortunately, Devonport seems to experience amongst the lowest retention rates in Australia in upper secondary school, and likewise very low participation rates in post-compulsory education including TAFE and university. Discussions with the then Chairman of Devonport Commercial Promotions, Mr Steven French, revealed that there is also a disappointingly low uptake of and participation rate in business development seminars. In particular, he was concerned that few local traders seemed aware of the threats and opportunities posed by the Internet, and that their response to difficult economic times was to work harder rather than smarter. He revealed that few, if any, local retailers would voluntarily invest in staff training and development unless they were part of larger chains with enlightened human resource policies. The Devonport Chamber of Commerce reported similar observations with respect to its various seminars and business development programs. During the research project, no attempt was made to contact large local industries, although this would clearly be vital if the ideal of a learning community is to be realised.

Partnerships and linkages

Despite the potential for collaboration between and among the various providers, there seemed to be a high degree of competition for students. Not unexpectedly, the Adult Education Institute within TAFE Tasmania seemed to have the greatest commitment towards collaboration; other organisations were more or less protective of their respective 'patches.' This can largely be attributed to the prevailing ideologies of competition and pragmatism, which together actively militate against organisations sharing resources or working for the benefit of the community.

Issues and challenges

In many senses, Devonport is the quintessential small Australian city. Things are certainly tough, but there is resilience and an underlying optimism, which suggests that hard work, perseverance and political acumen will eventually lead to a return to better times. However, behind this positive facade, it is possible to detect a genuine concern that things have changed forever; it is perceived that the future lies in new technologies and industries, and in having a flexible, responsive and better-educated workforce. The problem for many people is how to disengage from the old ways of doing things, and to find the time to take on new skills.

At the broadest level, there would seem to be four particular challenges to be faced:

- overcoming the stigma associated with 'learning'
- viewing expenditure on education and training as an investment rather than a cost
- reducing the excessive emphasis on competition, and creating a genuine partnership between various providers
- utilising the 'Devonport Online Access Centre' to develop greater familiarity with the Internet among local employers

Only a concerted, community-wide program, which draws together all the stakeholders in developing local solutions to local problems, is likely to be successful in creating a learning-led recovery for the city.

Conclusion

No two communities are the same. However, it would seem that, in many respects, a number of the problems and issues confronted in Devonport are no different from those experienced elsewhere in Australia. Against a backdrop of high unemployment and generally low levels of formal education, there is a general negativity towards learning in adulthood, an excessive emphasis on competition between providers, a somewhat short-sighted and instrumental reluctance on the part of employers to invest in training and development, and an apprehensive attitude towards new communications and information technologies, especially as they relate to small business.

If these attitudes and concerns can be overcome, Devonport's clever marketing slogan—*Top Centre in Tasmania*—might be fulfiled not just geographically but socially, culturally, educationally and economically as well.

Newcastle and the Hunter Region

Profile of area

Newcastle and the Hunter Valley were the areas which provided the starting point for Australia's industrial history—particularly in relation to coal and steel. The Region still produces 40% of Australia's aluminium and 80% of New South Wales' electricity, but the dominance of the traditional large industrial employers has been declining for at least fifteen years. With a highly diversified industrial base, 80% of the workforce are now employed in the service sector, particularly in tourism, education, health and retail.

The Region claims to lead the country in collaborative labour agreements, and has average salaries 19% less than Sydney. The rate of unemployment during 1997 was around 11%.

Newcastle was Australia's first commercial port, and is still one of the southern hemisphere's leading trade centres with the world's largest capacity coal facility. Rail and road connections support a diverse transport industry, and passenger traffic through Newcastle Airport at Williamstown rose 30% in 1997/8. The telecommunication infrastructure is also well established, and a 1998 survey by the Hunter Valley Research Foundation found that 16% of the Hunter people aged 19 and over have home access to the internet compared to 8% nationally. Some 46% of all Hunter residents over 18 years of age had access to a computer at home.

The population of the Hunter Region is 540 500, with Newcastle City Council Area accounting for 133 686. The following figures for the population over 15 years of age indicate a higher percentage of residents with Diploma or Skilled Vocational qualifications than the NSW average:

Highest qualification level attained: Percentage of population 15 years and over

	Hunter Region		NSW
	1996	1991	1996
Degree or higher	6.8	5.0	8.5
Diploma	6.2	5.3	5.1
Skilled vocational	13.3	13.1	8.5
Basic vocational	3.3	3.8	2.5
Not qualified	59.2	61.5	65.4

Source: Hunter Valley Research Foundation 1998, *The Hunter Region at a glance*

Economic restructuring

News of the intended closure of the BHP steelworks caused consternation around Australia, but within the Region today there is strong optimism about

the ability of the Hunter to restructure and further diversify. The steelworks had already shed a large percentage of workers over the past decade, and now the BHP workforce is only 1.5% of the Regional total. The Hunter Advantage Fund, created by the NSW State Government in the wake of the announcement of the closure, aims to create 2000 new jobs by the year 2000, and has already been successful in attracting substantial projects to the Region. These include:

- the relocation and expansion of a call centre for Australian Wine Selectors and the establishment of a wine centre
- the relocation and expansion of a veterinary pharmaceutical manufacturing plant
- a concrete product manufacturing plant

The opening of the $2 million Australian Marine Design and Construction facility (AMDAC) in September 1998 is expected to lead to the generation of up to 1000 indirect jobs for the Hunter.

The continuing shift from low cost, high volume mass production to knowledge-intensive, flexible specialisation competing on design, innovation and quality as well as price, is seen as the best hope for the economic future of the region. Such a shift clearly involves significant training and re-training initiatives.

Workforce skills

The region's workforce is upskilling. The number of those described as professionals living in the area have almost doubled since 1991; unskilled labourers have declined by a third; residents with university bachelor degrees have risen by a third, and those with a TAFE associate diploma have doubled. The availability of a skilled workforce and a range of public and private education providers is one of the attractions the Hunter Economic Development Corporation (HEDC) offers potential investors. The HEDC collaborates with the University of Newcastle and Hunter Institute of Technology in offering training packages for investment projects requiring new workskills, and is at present considering the establishment of a Centre for Call Centre Management in the region to give a competitive advantage in attracting investment in call centres in the region.

Educational infrastructure

There are 241 primary schools, 48 secondary schools and 25 private schools in the Hunter region, with more than 95 000 pupils. 97.5% of Year 12 students go on to University.

The University of Newcastle has 18 000 students, two major campuses and 11 Faculties. There are over 200 private providers of workplace training and BHP's Training Centre has been purchased by Calsa, a specialist defence training and logistics services company.

Hunter Institute of Technology

The Hunter Institute of Technology is the largest provider of VET in the Hunter region, with over 48 000 students on fifteen campuses. The significant

restructuring of the economy of the Hunter, and the re-skilling demands which accompany this, clearly demand a flexible and creative response from the major vocational provider. The Institute's Strategic Plan for 1998–2000 suggests that this challenge is recognised and has every chance of being met.

Although the term 'lifelong learning' is not specifically used, there are many elements in the Strategic Plan which support the idea of lifelong learning. The Plan recognises that technological, economic and societal changes have impacted on how and where we work and learn, and identifies as significant the following aspects of the context in which the Institute is now working to provide effective vocational education:

- globalisation of the economy
- technological development
- trend to service industries
- industry re-structuring
- shifts in employment patterns
- competition
- focus on service and quality
- shrinking resource base

In response to this volatile environment the Plan:

- maintains a central focus on change and reform in response to the complex and changing VET environment
- recognises that our success in this environment requires responsiveness to customer needs and collaboration with industry and other training providers
- encourages flexibility and customisation of quality VET products and services which facilitate work related learning
- promotes the continued development of an innovative learning organisation which encourages and supports continuous improvement in all our activities
- strengthens commitment to educational pathways for students

The specific goals of the Institute include to:

- develop and deliver responsive and competitive quality VET programs, products and services that meet customer needs
- develop and maintain an innovative learning organisation in which individual and team contributions are valued and maximised
- enhance educational pathways for all students

All three of these goals contribute to the promotion of lifelong learning. The availability of recognisable and accessible educational pathways is a particularly important prerequisite for effective lifelong learning, and the performance measures and actions listed against the goal 'Enhance educational pathways for all students' indicate some of the elements required to achieve this:

- focus on educational outcomes
- strengthen support services for students and customers
- maximise vocational education and training opportunities for equity groups
- collaborate with community groups to maximise education and training opportunities in the region
- work collaboratively with community and other providers to maximise opportunities for equity groups within the region

- expand articulation arrangements with other providers and within the Department of Education and Training (Schools and Community Education)

In order to maximise the development of pathways between the various sectors of education and between workplaces and the Institute, senior Institute managers are involved in numerous committees and working parties with educational organisations and industry. The Institute is one of the largest providers of joint TAFE/School programs in NSW, and is also undertaking various projects to improve links between schools and TAFE. At Glenbrook, for example, where the High School is located next to a TAFE College, there is a project under way to map pathways. There is also a committee to discuss articulation arrangements with the University of Newcastle and ensure effective pathways for students between the two institutions in both directions.

For many adults who never expected to return to study once they had left school, the experience of redundancy and the need for re-training is extremely challenging. The possibility of gaining credit for competencies gained through uncredentialled workplace learning can be an important step on the pathway to new learning. The Hunter Institute's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Centre offers the chance for people to gain credentials for learning from experience; for example, when Procter and Gambol closed down their operations on the Central Coast of NSW, the Centre was contracted to provide an RPL process for the workers there so that they could document the competencies they already possessed.

For adults considering a return to study the available opportunities can seem elusive and complicated. Through its Counsellors, Courses Information Centre and telephone Hotline, the Institute is also able to assist potential learners looking for access to appropriate courses. The idea of learning as a lifelong activity is explicitly promoted in some courses, especially at entry level.

An example of the Institute's flexible response to learners' needs is the development of increasingly flexible modes of delivery of vocational training. This includes the provision of courses commencing at 2.00 am, to meet the needs of miners on shift work. Another example is the establishment of a Centre for Shipbuilding and Boatbuilding Studies. Whereas the traditional courses in these areas were declining, the new Centre—with both computer and text based materials, workshops and staff available on a flexible basis—is attracting increasing numbers of students who welcome the chance to work at their own pace in the Centre or at home, and not in lock step with a whole class.

Non-formal learning: Incubators and clusters

The demands of an increasingly changeable industrial environment mean that learning needs to take place within workplaces and among members of networks of common interests, as well as through traditional providers of vocational courses. The people of Newcastle and the Hunter Region tend to have strong local connections, so there are plenty of existing natural linkages—but these are now being strengthened by more formalised networks. 'Incubators' are sites which provide workspace for new businesses, and a 'sheltered' environment in which they can grow. The Lake Macquarie incubator project, for example, will have 20 workspaces for new businesses. Each

incubator has a manager who gives advice about business planning and other aspects of setting up a new business; it also organises short courses as necessary. A board of management, which includes representatives from providers like TAFE, as well as local, successful businesspeople, is another source of informal learning on a one-to-one or more organised basis. Apart from this, the proximity of a number of businesses in similar stages of development will lead to sharing of experiences and ideas, all of which contribute to the knowledge base of those working there.

'Clusters' are local industry networks which have been successful in a number of areas internationally, most famous perhaps being California's Silicon Valley. Others are operating in Italy, New Zealand and England. In the Hunter, the Hunter Regional Development Organisation(HURDO), with funding initially from the Federal Government and now from the BHP Trust, is fostering cluster development as a way of enhancing the region's economic competitiveness. This is particularly important in relation to the globalised economy where regions must be represented in the global market but individual enterprises may not be equipped to compete globally.

The Hunter Regional Economic Strategy initially identified 23 potential clusters in the Hunter region. Through a regional consultation and workshop process this has been re-defined to 17, including agribusiness, building and construction, mining, defence industries and education and training. Not all the clusters are working in the same way, and some are more effective than others. Although there is agreement that education is an important aspect of the effectiveness of clusters, there are suggestions that instead of a specific Education Cluster (currently known as EdNet) all clusters should include appropriate educational agencies and organisations.

Learning from the experience of other cluster members is clearly a central aspect of the clusters' purpose. In the Network Paradigm the authors refer to 'regions in the process of restructuring which develop networking between agencies and organisations. Such regions are engaged in a productive learning and adaptation process based on intraorganisational and interorganisational networking.' [1]

In a discussion paper commissioned by HURDO, Cristina Martinez outlines the process of cluster development and describes the new form of leadership required to make clusters successful. Words like 'learning,' 'knowledge,' 'facilitating' and 'action research' appear frequently, indicating that this is a different form of leadership or management; Martinez contrasts this with the classic form of leadership, 'associated more with holding on to power and less with passing on knowledge.' [2] She says that the role of leader in a cluster

> *Encompasses being the facilitator of learning, designing specific 'learning vehicles' such as conferences, forums and workshops. By definition , a rapidly changing reality requires focus on current issues, thus the leader is also acting as a facilitator of changing mental models of people in the organisations, him/herself included. A fluent circulation of information and knowledge amongst the cluster participants will achieve this.* (Martinez 1998, p.38)

The idea of the 'learning economy' also appears important for the productive growth of clusters. Asheim differentiates knowledge as a modern economic resource and learning as a strategic process:

> *The learning economy is based on the view that knowledge is the most fundamental resource in a modern capitalist economy, and learning the most important process, thus making the learning capacity of an economy of strategic importance to its innovativeness and competitiveness.* (Asheim 1996)

It is not only the direct participants in the industries and organisation involved in the cluster who need to learn about economic development and its possibilities; according to Martinez, the wider community is also important:

> *Innovative communities share the economic strategies of the region, and participate in its evolution. A community that knows its economic goals and objectives can positively contribute to the promotion and development of the region.* (Martinez 1998, p.68)

Community education

Just as those concerned with economic development are recognising the importance of broader community involvement in the process of understanding and supporting regional development, so those organisations traditionally concerned mainly with community based 'leisure' learning are becoming more involved in vocational education. The Hunter Region WEA is the largest provider of community based adult education in the region, and in 1992 had 98% of its provision in its traditional form of general, non-vocational, community adult education. By 1998 it has an increased number of students involved in general courses, but now they form only 40% of the total provision, with 25-30% of the provision identified as vocational education, and the rest in the form of government sponsored contract work such as the Department of Community Services Youth at Risk program. The involvement of the WEA and, on a smaller scale, other community providers in workplace training appears to be growing very rapidly. During 1997 the WEA appointed a full time co-ordinator for Industry Training, and in the same year enrolments in their VET courses grew by 300%.

The WEA has been involved along with other providers in presenting re-training programs for workers from the BHP Steel works. The example of a boilermaker turned massage therapist, mentioned by more than one of those interviewed for this study, is claimed to be the result of a WEA course.

The broadening of the participation base in traditional providers like the WEA, through the organisation's involvement in equity and workplace training programs, enhances the possibility of those previously uninvolved in adult education making connections with the more traditional aspects of adult education provision, and recognising its possibilities as a resource for learning throughout their lives.

Learning communities

Those involved in promoting the economic development of Newcastle and the Hunter—such as Beverley Firth, General Manager of the Hunter Economic Development Corporation—are well aware of the importance of lifelong access to vocational education for the workforce in the region. The educational infrastructure, both formal and informal, is seen as an important drawcard for potential investors in the region, supporting the vision of the Hunter as a region able to cope with constant change and re-learning.

The use of learning as an explicit strategy in economic development is the key to the learning city approach adopted in a number of places throughout the world, particularly in the OECD. No formal moves in this direction have been taken in Newcastle, but the idea has been raised in meetings of the New Image of the Hunter Task Force which has its secretariat at the Hunter Economic Development Council. Given the strong commitment to both formal and informal learning, and the range of thriving collaborative ventures already under way in this region, the Hunter would seem to be fertile ground for the further development of the concept of the Learning Community.

Notes

1 Cooke, P & Morgan, K 1993, 'The network paradigm: New departures in corporate and regional development,' *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 11, pp.543–64.

2 Martinez, C 1998, *Industry clusters: Competitive advantage through innovation*, Industry Cluster Studies No. 1, July 1998, Hunter Regional Development Organisation, Newcastle, p.40.

Canberra

Profile of area

Canberra is a city in transition. Founded as the national capital and seat of government, it has for most of its history been dependent on public sector employment to fuel its economic and social development. However, with recent cuts in public sector employment, the ACT government is now seeking to develop a broader employment base for the city to sustain the development of Canberra into the 21st century.

This development has gone along with the implementation of self-government over the past decade so that Canberra has had to adjust to a regular self-governing territory status in provision of services and in funding.

At the same time, Canberra is developing a new role as the hub of the region—which lies in New South Wales—surrounding the city. Each of these developments are likely to have a significant bearing on lifelong learning in Canberra and the identity of the city in the next century.

Canberra is unique among Australian cities in a number of respects. Its population is generally well educated and literate to levels above the national norm. As a self-governing territory of the Commonwealth, it has characteristics of a 'city state' that have no counterpart elsewhere in Australia.

It has also the legacy of a planned city. From 1957 to 1988 Canberra was developed as a planned city under the aegis of the National Capital Development Commission (NCDC): an approach that included integrated educational and social planning as well as physical and economic planning. In 1988 NCDC was abolished, and separate planning bodies were established for the territorial and national capital roles reflecting a duality of identities that continues to the present.

The city is richly endowed with educational, cultural, and research resources. As the site of four universities, a TAFE Institute, and a quality school system, the city has much to build on in providing lifelong learning opportunities for its citizens. These educational resources are complemented by cultural assets, such as the National Gallery and National Library, which add to the richness of the environment. It is, in these respects, uniquely placed to innovate in fostering the transition to a learning society.

While there is much in Canberra to provide the foundations of lifelong learning for all in a learning society, the interest of this case study lies in the extent to which these resources have actually been oriented towards lifelong learning objectives so as to extend opportunities for all citizens on a whole of life basis, and to provide a basis for integrated economic, social and cultural development in the emerging conditions of the 21st century.

The city and its role

Canberra had an estimated population of 309 800 at 30 June 1997.[1] The growth rate of 0.5% in 1996–97 was the third lowest of all Australian States and Territories, and contrasts with the rapid population growth that Canberra experienced in the 1960–1990 period.[2]

This population is characterised by a number of distinctive features:

- the level of educational qualifications, which is significantly above the Australian average
- the high level of literacy compared to the Australian average
- the high proportion of persons aged 15–24 attending educational institutions (56.9%)

In sum, these characteristics mean that Canberra has an overall well educated population with high levels of literacy and with a significant proportion of young people enrolled in education institutions.

These features are illustrated in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Post-school qualification

	1991 Census		1996 Census	
	ACT %	Aust %	ACT %	Aust %
Higher degree	6.9	2.5	8.0	3.3
Postgraduate diploma	4.2	2.4	5.7	3.1
Bachelor degree	27.3	14.6	30.3	18.5
Undergraduate diploma	9.2	10.1	7.3	8.3
Associate diploma	3.8	3.4	6.9	6.2
Skilled vocational qualification	16.1	26.4	13.5	25.4
Basic vocational qualification	9.3	8.5	7.5	6.8
Inadequately described or not stated	23.2	32.1	20.8	28.4
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: ABS, unpublished data, *Census of Population and Housing*, 1991 and 1996

Table 2: Literacy skill levels, ACT and Australia —1996[3]

	Level 1 %	Level 2 %	Level 3 %	Level 4/5 %
Prose scale				
ACT	12.1	19.6	41.1	27.3
Australia	19.7	27.5	35.3	17.5
Document scale				
ACT	10.7	20.5	40.6	28.2
Australia	19.5	28.3	36.1	16.1
Quantitative scale				
ACT	12.5	20.6	38.1	28.8
Australia	19.2	27.2	36.0	17.7

Source: *Aspects of Literacy, Assessed Skill Levels*, Australia, 1996 (Cat. No. 4228.0)

The significant gap between the ACT situation and the national position on all three measures of literacy, and at all five levels, reflects the character of the ACT community and the significant human resources in the Territory.

Industry and employment

A key development over the past decade has been the shifting balance between public and private sector employment. Whereas in 1983 59.9% of employment was in the public sector and 40.1% in the private sector—so that Canberra could then be properly regarded as a 'company town' with government its main business—by May 1997 these proportions had reversed, with the public sector declining to 47.6% and the private sector rising to 52.4%.[3] Public sector employment fell from 75 300 in 1995 to 67 800 by May 1997.

This shift in balance was accelerated by cuts to public service employment from 1996, with strengthened efforts to foster private sector industry in the decade following ACT self government in 1989. This trend now appears irreversible, and Canberra, as a city in transition, is in the process of assuming an identity as something different to a public service company town. This process is not yet complete.

Canberra is now a city of small businesses, as shown in Table 3. The *larger* firms in Canberra are mainly branches of firms located elsewhere, so that business in Canberra reflects a small business culture and perspectives. This is somewhat paradoxical in a city serving as the national capital with strong diplomatic and other international links to all parts of the world. This situation reflects a number of tensions, and apparent paradoxes, that have been present throughout the history and development of Canberra, and which will need to be resolved as Canberra moves to become a learning society in a globalised technological world of change and discontinuity.

Table 3: ABS Business Register counts of locations, by ANZSIC division and employment size

ANZSIC division	Employment size na	<5	5–9	10–19	20–49	50–99	100*	Total
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	59	94	13	2	60	0	0	174
Mining	0	8	1	0	1	0	0	10
Manufacturing	0	208	95	37	28	8	6	382
Electricity, gas & water supply	0	6	3	2	2	1	1	15
Construction	0	1142	150	47	29	5	4	1377
Wholesale trade	0	375	171	56	19	11	0	632
Retail trade	0	1385	618	244	71	23	23	2364
Accommodation, cafes & restaurants	0	233	185	117	58	22	12	627
Transport and storage	0	322	55	16	13	6	9	421
Communication services	0	42	17	12	4	6	7	88
Finance & insurance	0	417	91	50	21	4	5	588
Property & business services	0	2525	353	179	81	37	29	3204
Government admin & defence	0	109	26	25	62	33	70	325
Education	0	301	45	54	64	40	9	413
Cultural & recreational services	0	258	91	49	41	16	9	464
Personal & other services	0	635	190	65	31	4	11	936
Total	**59**	**8754**	**2353**	**1059**	**576**	**232**	**208**	**13240**

Source: ABS, unpublished data, Business Register Section

Table 4 shows how employment is distributed across Canberra's industry sectors. While government administration and defence is still the major employer, this sector share has fallen to 25.9% of total employment. Manufacturing remains low at 2.9% compared to the national average of 13.5%. In addition to the small scale of most businesses in the private sector, home-based businesses make up a vary large proportion of the total small business picture in the ACT. In February 1997 there were 11 900 operators of small businesses operating from home, representing 62% of all operators of small businesses in the ACT.[4] This trend has been influenced by the outsourcing of functions by government agencies.

Table 4: ACT wage and salary earners by industry

ANZSIC major group	1997/98	Percentage
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	300	0.2
Mining	100	0.0
Manufacturing	4 200	2.9
Electricity, gas & water supply	600	0.4
Construction	6 200	4.4
Wholesale trade	4 500	3.2
Retail trade	18 500	13.1
Accommodation, cafes & restaurants	7 400	5.3
Communication services	2 400	1.7
Finance & insurance	3 400	2.4
Property & business services	17 600	12.4
Government administration & defence	36 600	25.9
Education	12 200	8.6
Health & community services	11 100	7.8
Cultural & recreational services	6 500	4.6
Personal & other services	5 700	4.0
Total	**141 300**	**100.00**

Source: ABS Labour Force survey

Canberra's unemployment rate has remained somewhat below the national unemployment rate, although the gap has been narrowing since 1993. In 1996–67 there were 13 400 people unemployed, with an employment rate of 8.0%. This has risen from 5.9% in 1990–91.[5]

Youth unemployment is a serious problem in Canberra, although the situation is influenced by the high proportion of teenagers in full time education. In 1996–97, 16 900 of the 22 700 Canberra residents between the ages of 15 and 19 attended an education institution full-time. This represented 74.0% of this age group. The 1996–97 unemployment rate of teenagers (15–19 year old) who had left education was 29.4%. Canberra's youth problem is a significant issue to be addressed in the path to an inclusive learning society.

Education

Canberra is a city richly endowed with educational resources. These resources include:

- 4 universities: the Australian National University, the University of Canberra, the Australian Defence Force Academy, and Signadou campus of the Australian Catholic University

- ❖ the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) and a range of private providers in the VET sector
- ❖ a diversity of adult and community education providers
- ❖ a quality school system, which in February 1998 enrolled 61 293 students[7]

The school system has operated secondary colleges with diverse offerings since the 1970s, and is featured by a high school retention through to Year 12. In 1997 the apparent retention rate was 92.2%—a slight fall from the level of 94.2% in 1993.[7]

The nature of Canberra's population and the rich educational endowment have resulted in the literacy outcomes, discussed above, which are considerably above the national average.

There is no standing mechanism to foster partnership and co-operation across all sectors of education and training, so relationships are *ad hoc*, with initiatives taken from time to time in particular fields such as the export of educational services.

An overarching ACT Education and Training Council with advisory functions did exist between 1987 and 1990, in the lead up to ACT self government, to foster information exchange and co-operation with membership at chief executive level.

While the Council fostered useful information exchange, in the absence of a shared vision for Canberra's development, and common objectives, the Council did not have a strategic long-term impact.

As the focus of this study is on the VET sector and lifelong learning, the development of Adult and Community Education (ACE) in the territory, the work of the Canberra Institute of Technology, and the status of training is now discussed.

Development of ACE in Canberra

A key event for the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities in Canberra has been the development of a government role in the ACE sector over the past three years. This development, which may prove to be a significant step in Canberra's path towards a learning society, demonstrates the interplay of national influence and local action in the development of policy, and the power of ideas in stimulating such action.

Before 1995, there was no legislative basis for adult and community education in Canberra and no government mechanism to foster and promote funding for the sector. ACE was seen as a matter for voluntary action with clients responding to the offerings of bodies such as the Centre for Continuing Education of the Australian National University and the offerings of CIT Solutions and CIT itself. This situation changed as a result of the 1991 Senate Standing Committee Report on ACE, *Come in Cinderella*, and the subsequent development of a national policy by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs for Adult Community Education, which was endorsed in 1993.

This identified need led to legislation in 1995 for the Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA), which included provision for the ACE sector for the

first time. This legislation now included provision for an ACT Advisory Council on Adult and Community Education to provide advice to the Minister.

The Council was formally established in February 1997, and in July of that year an ACT Policy on Adult Community Education was issued following consultations focussed by a discussion paper. A Strategic Plan for 1997–1999 was also issued in August 1997.

The 1997 ACE policy recognised lifelong learning in the following identified objectives:

- maximising lifelong learning opportunities through the development of closer linkages within the ACE sector
- opening pathways to other education and training sectors and the world of work

The policy recognised ACE as an activity oriented towards lifelong learning.

These objectives have been pursued through a modest level of funding, distributed to providers through the Council. Funding of $100 000 was then increased to $250 000 to enable the Council to support identified priorities. These priorities included older people—including the University of the Third Age—in the context of Canberra's ageing population.

Up to now quality statistics have not been available on participation patterns in ACE in Canberra. The available information suggests that ageing patterns are similar nationally. This need is now being addressed through an ACE mapping project undertaken with ANTA funding. This information, when available, should enable ACE policy to be further refined and developed in Canberra so as to meet ACT objectives and priorities for the sector.

Canberra's ACE Council is a recent development, but it is well placed to be a key player in the transition towards lifelong learning in the city.

Canberra Institute of Technology

CIT is the major VET provider in the territory. The Institute has been an innovative institution from its inception, developing a persona distinct from its origins in three small New South Wales TAFE Colleges. Much of this innovation has focussed upon such areas as the international activities of the Institute, its high level training for the hospitality industry, and the entrepreneurial role of CIT Solutions. In a number of these fields CIT has exercised national leadership.

The current focus of CIT, as set out in its 1998–2001 Strategic Plan, is on its vocational training role for industry. This is reflected in the mission and vision statements of the Institute:

Mission

To develop an educated, skilled and flexible workplace.

Vision

Our Institute will be a leader in quality vocational education and training, and will be innovative, forward-looking, responsive to our clients and to our changing environment, and relevant to industry and the community.

Lifelong learning does not appear as an objective in either the mission or vision

statements of the Institute, or in the six goals identified in the Strategic Plan. However, it is reflected in one of the six values associated with the mission and vision statements.

> Values
>
> *Integrity and professionalism, equity, accountability, lifelong learning, commitment to a corporate culture of shared vision and team work.*

The Strategic Plan does not indicate how lifelong learning as a value is to be furthered.

An issue for CIT, then, is whether strategic planning for the Institute should include explicit reference to lifelong learning as a key objective, both for the Institute and the community generally and all other stakeholders. Elucidation of the 'changing environment' of the Institute would suggest the imperative need for this recognition. Such recognition will require substantial partnership development.

CIT shares with most VET institutions in Australia this lack of recognition of the centrality of lifelong learning in the new socio-economic context of VET, which is characterised by the impact of globalisation, rampant technologies, radical changes in the workplace and in work practices, and few certainties in a world of discontinuity and escalating change. This is not surprising, as lifelong learning has not featured as a goal of the VET sector until this year when it was recognised in the ANTA National Strategy for 1998–2003—and VET institutions have been subject to the pressures of policies deriving from training reform.[8]

However, CIT has moved in other ways to become more responsive to client needs in, for example, its development of flexible delivery and provision for special needs such as those of students with disabilities. The establishment of a Flexible Learning Centre in the Tuggeranong Town Centre has extended learning opportunities on a flexible basis to people in the Tuggeranong Valley, while a further Flexible Learning Centre in the main Reid Campus of the Institute is able to build on the Tuggeranong experience.

Training

Employers in the ACT provided more training for their employees in 1997 than the national average. This is shown in Table 5. There was less use of external training providers than the national situation.

Table 5: Employers reporting training practices, 1997

Training practices	ACT %	Australia %
Employers reporting in-house training	65.1	59.2
Support provided for structured training		
Paid wages while attending training	88.8	90.6
Paid employees course fees	65.7	59.6
Any support provided for structured training	100.0	98.5
Used an external training provider	68.2	89.1

Source: Employer Training Practices, Australia (Cat. No. 6356.0)

This result is pleasing in the light of the small business dominance in the territory. ACT industry has much to gain from the innovative use of modern

learning technology and the adoption of innovations such as learning networks, which have been successfully applied in the small business sector in other parts of the world.[9]

The regional dimension

A significant influence upon the changing character of Canberra over the past decade has been the strengthening of relationships with the region of New South Wales surrounding the city. It is probable that these relationships will be strengthened further in the future, with a consequent impact on the character and identify of Canberra. Regional learning partnerships could be a significant influence on the opening of Canberra to its environment, and the development of Canberra as a learning community.

Prior to ACT self-government, relationships with the region were undeveloped in a city viewed basically as a national capital and the seat of government administration. With self-government in 1989, the recognised need to foster the economic viability of Canberra led to initial steps in the direction of regional co-operation and a regional identify for Canberra.

The South East Economic Development Council (SEEDC) released the first regional development strategy in 1991. This strategy broke new ground by articulating a vision and economic development strategies for both Canberra and the surrounding regional areas of New South Wales.

In 1994 the strategy was reviewed and, in the same year, SEEDC was replaced by the Australian Capital Region Development Council (ACRDC). ACRDC was established jointly by the two governments, and was given a mandate which included developing and implementing a regional economic development strategy, conducting forums in the region to stimulate initiatives, marketing, and providing advice to the two governments. Its mandate covered Canberra, the 15 shires around Canberra, and the cities of Goulburn and Queanbeyan.

Following these 1994 initiatives, an Interim Strategy was developed and released in 1995. Consultations and regional working groups carried forward this action, and a series of 'regional partnership forums' held in October 1996 provided for further consultations.[10] This activity culminated in the new Economic Development Strategy for the region released in May 1997, together with the adoption of the name 'Australian Capital Region' to provide identity for the region.

This regional development activity over the past decade has been accompanied by shifts in attitudes towards collaboration. Whereas the initial regional development strategy of 1991 was greeted with reservations concerning the likely domination of Canberra's interest as the major player, by 1997 a climate of co-operation and trust had evolved with a recognition of the potential gains for all parties.

These shifts in attitudes were prompted by the careful consultative processes adopted by the Council, and by initiatives such as the establishment of a Regional Leaders Forum chaired by the ACT Chief Minister, which included the elected mayors of all the constituent local government councils.

While education was included as a Key Result Area in the 1997 Economic Development Strategy, little has happened so far in this area because of the roles of other bodies with education interests, such as CANTRADE and the Canberra Business Council.

However, the interest of the Council in such fields as the extension of telecommunications through the region could well lead to collaborative partnerships with Canberra institutions. The University of Canberra is already interested in extending its role in the region, and considering options for doing this.

The history of strengthening regional co-operation over the past decade illustrates the power of partnership strategies that forge partnerships and build linkages and networks. Such partnerships are the stuff of a learning society, and it could be that the evolving regional dimension will have a significant influence on the development of Canberra as a learning society with lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Towards lifelong learning for all

A number of steps have been taken in Canberra in the past five years that seem likely to contribute to Canberra's progress towards the objective of lifelong learning for all in a learning society.

These steps include:

- strategic planning for the school system for the period 1998–2000, which includes committing to lifelong learning as a priority
- the developments in the ACE sector discussed above
- action by the Canberra Institute of Technology to extend flexible learning provision and to address special needs
- strengthened regional links through the role of the Australian Capital Region Development Council, which are likely to open up expanded opportunities

These steps largely compliment each other and provide a framework, albeit incomplete, for progressing towards lifelong learning for all. Some of the main issues and gaps are discussed below.

Schools

The Territory's Education Plan for 1998–2000 is an enlightened document which aims to provide the foundations for lifelong learning. Its key components include:

- a commitment to lifelong learning as a priority
- the objectives of developing schools as learning organisations that will have well developed partnerships with the community, other education sectors, business and others
- the objective of schools collaborating in networks, clusters, and regions to foster innovative resourcing models
- The ACT has also developed a Literacy Strategy covering preschool to Year 11

ACE

This is discussed above.

VET strategic planning

The draft Vocational Education and Training Authority's Strategic Plan for 1999–2001 in its draft stages focuses on lifelong learning for the Canberra community. The plan will be completed early in 1999.

Canberra Institute of Technology

CIT's commitment to more flexible, student focussed provision has included the development of Flexible Learning Centres in the Tuggeranong Town Centre and on the main Reid Campus of the Institute—and progress has been made in meeting special needs such as those of students with disabilities.

Strengthening regional links

The role of the Australian Capital Region Development Council in strengthening regional linkages and partnership is discussed above. Such linkages could have significant consequences for Canberra's future as a learning community.

Issues to be addressed

While Canberra is well placed to build upon its rich educational and cultural endowment, and to develop as a learning community providing lifelong learning opportunities for all, a number of issues have been identified in this study which could impede such development, and which need to be addressed.

These issues are:

- an environment which has fostered competition rather than co-operation, so that collaborative arrangements are less well developed than in other locations we observed in the case studies
- the small size of the Territory, so that there is little financial flexibility in providing funds for innovation
- equity issues relating to groups who do not fit the dominant socio-economic profile of the city, in particular unemployed young people

Competition and co-operation

The environment of economic rationalism has favoured an ethos of competition rather than co-operation, so that collaborative arrangements are less well developed than in other areas we observed.

This may also reflect the nature and history of the city, which has had significant 'migrant' populations moving in and out without establishing long-nurtured community bonds. The small business culture of the business sector appears to be a further influence.

The consequence is that Canberra does not have quality, well-developed learning partnerships that provide for an on-going dialogue and collaboration.

There is no standing mechanism that brings all the stakeholders together for joint action. While an ACT Education and Training Council existed between 1987 and 1990 to connect all the sectors of education and training at chief executive level, the Council, while useful for information exchanges, had little long term impact. This probably reflected the absence of shared strategic purposes in the period leading up to ACT self-government.

The context is now substantially different, and the aspiration for Canberra to develop as a Learning City offers a strategic way of developing quality learning partnerships and enhanced collaboration. This will be a key issue for Canberra to address in the transition to a learning society.

Regional co-operation through the Australian Capital Region Development Council could also be a factor in shifting the balance between competition and co-operation.

Size, funding and innovation

The small population of the ACT, and the consequent small financial base of the Territory, can both facilitate and impede innovation. While change is easier to bring about than in the large state systems, there is also less financial flexibility in allocating funds for innovation. Canberra is heavily dependent on external sources, such as ANTA and DEETYA, for innovation-type funding to drive special developments.

This has operated as a barrier to major innovation in the school and VET sectors in recent years. This factor suggests the need for partnership arrangements whereby Canberra links to innovation networks in other states (and indeed overseas), to share research and development costs. As a small component in the Australian federal system, Canberra benefits more from national co-operative action than the larger states, and shares this situation with Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

Equity and disadvantaged groups

The socio-educational profile of Canberra discussed above points to a city with less diversity than the larger metropolitan centres of Australia: Canberra's population is largely well educated, fairly affluent, and literate above the national profile.

While this provides a strong base for Canberra to progress as a learning society with lifelong learning opportunities, it also disadvantages those who do not fit the dominant city profile. Polarisation into learning rich and learning poor exists in Canberra as elsewhere in Australia, although the composition below the learning divide differs somewhat to the rest of Australia.

Canberra has made progress in meeting the special needs of people from a non-English speaking background, those with disabilities, and Aboriginal people. However, the needs of deprived groups of young people are less well met, and youth employment in the city remains unacceptably high.

This situation reflects a number of influences including the nature of Canberra's labour market, which offers fairly limited employment opportunities for young people without good qualifications.

The youth problem appears to be a priority for Canberra to address in the journey towards lifelong learning for all. The development of strong public and private sector collaborative partnerships, as discussed above, could be an instrument for concerted community action to address this problem. Learning community development in Canberra could provide a framework for such collaborative action, with an expanded ACE role as a key instrument for a cohesive inclusive society.

Information, guidance and demand

The Canberra study also demonstrates the need for quality information and guidance that is available in forms to meet the needs of non-participants. The importance of effective demand side strategies, to create a demand for learning among non-participants, is illustrated by the ACT experience. The ACT experience also confirms the role of community bodies such as the various youth and community centres in this task. While there have been some notable successes, the need still exists for effective information and guidance strategies to stimulate and support demand for learning.

Conclusions

The main themes to emerge from this study relate to the situation of Canberra as a city in transition, from its former role and status to a future not yet fully delineated. The concurrence of self-government with its financial pressures, with significant changes in the employment base and economy of the territory and with an evolving regional role, have driven changes that point to a different future for Canberra, and a different identify.

As yet, lifelong learning objectives have not featured as major territory objectives, although there is much in the present pattern of development, and the base of resources, that could further the objective of lifelong learning for all in a learning society.
The harbingers of change in this direction may be observed in:

- the commitment of the school system to lifelong learning in the strategic planning of the system
- in draft strategic planning for the VET sector in 1993–2001
- in the strengthened role of adult and community education in the territory

Equity objectives remain to be addressed, however—particularly in respect to opportunities for unemployed youth. There is much opportunity for creative innovation.

Strategic learning partnerships, associating all stakeholders, are not yet as well developed as is required in a learning community offering lifelong learning opportunities for all. The catalysts for such partnerships need to be identified and addressed.

The small discretionary funds available for innovation are likely to be a barrier, and traditional funding priorities may need to be reviewed. This will require a shared vision of Canberra as a competitive, inclusive learning society able to respond to change in a creative manner and offer a quality lifestyle for its citizens. How such a shared vision might be fostered in a community like Canberra is perhaps the most critical and vexing question of all.

Notes

1 ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 1998, *Australian Capital Territory in focus 1998*, ABS, Canberra, p.37.

2 The survey aspects of literacy (SAL) was a national survey conducted by ABS in 1996 as a component in an international survey in OECD countries. Literacy was assessed at five levels of three types of literacy (prose, document and quantitative). People at Level 1 have poor literacy skills while level 2 also would involve difficulties in more complex tasks. Levels 3–5 may be regarded as levels able to cope with most literacy requirements.

3 ABS, unpublished statistics.

4 ABS 1998, p.118.

5 Ibid p.95.

6 ACRDC (Australian Capital Region Development Council) 1997, *Dealing with change: An economic development strategy for the Australian Capital Region*, ACDRC, Canberra, p.3.

7 Ibid., pp.3–5.

8 ABS 1998, p.57.

9 Ibid., p.58.

10 ACRDC 1997, p.4.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research is Australia's primary research and development organisation in the field of vocational education training.

NCVER undertakes and manages research programs and monitors the performance of Australia's training system.

NCVER provides a range of information aimed at improving the quality of training at all levels.

ISBN 0 97397 546 4